TAFF

TRIP REPORT ANTHOLOGY

Second Edition

TAFF Trip Report Anthology

Second Edition

Edited by David Langford

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Contents

Title Page
Introduction
TAFF in Thirteen Paragraphs

1963: Wally Weber
Cry Abroad

1965: Terry Carr
Beyond the Mnemonic Statute of Limitations

1970: Elliot K. Shorter
Introduction – A Shorter Odyssey
How Fearless Leader Got His Name
Heicon Report

1974: Peter Weston
Stranger in a Very Strange Land

1976: Roy Tackett
Tackett's Travels in Taffland

1979: Terry Hughes
Two-Fisted TAFF Tales
An Excerpt from Chapter Nine

1981: Stu Shiffman

Suddenly, Last Winter
A Raffles Lad Abroad or The Road to Yorcon

1983: Avedon Carol
Untitled
The Present State of Affairs

1985: Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden
Introductory
Work in Progress
Aspects & Inclinations

1986: Greg Pickersgill
Fragments
TAFFman at ConFederation
TAFFman in Toronto

1988: Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake
Chapter 1: In the beginning God said let there be flight
Chapter 2: The Once and Future Seattle
Let's Go to San Francisco
Voodoo Jambalaya
The Untitled Chapter

1989: Robert Lichtman
Doorway
Report in Progress

1991: Pam Wells
Introductory: Depression Tango

Chapter 1: All Gone to Look for America
Chapter 2: Minneapolis Memories

1992: Jeanne Bowman
The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 1
The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 2

1993: Abigail Frost
In Progress
The Frost Report
The Frost Report: Fragment
The Frost Report: ConFrancisco

1995: Dan Steffan
TAFFragment 1: Riding the TAFF Rails
TAFFragment 2: You Can't Get There from Here
TAFFragment 3: Leave the Driving to Us
TAFFragment 4: Go West, Young Fan
TAFFragment 5: Hotel Hansen (The Early Years)

1998: Ulrika O'Brien
Exit, Pursued by a Gael: A Taff Defense of Sorts

1998: Maureen Kincaid Speller
Snufkin Goes West... 1
Snufkin Goes West... 2
Snufkin Goes West... 3
Snufkin Goes West... 4

2003: Randy Byers

Blame TAFF
Chapter 1: Why I Ran For TAFF
Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 1)
Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 2): Against the Sneers of Nothingness

2009: Steve Green
Taff Notes: Prelude
Westward Bound!
LV Confidential

2010: Anne and Brian Gray
Anne and Brian Trip Through Corflu

2014: Curt Phillips
There Was a Tear, and Some Beer, in Reading

2017: John Purcell
Riding on the Metro

2020: Michael Lowrey
Chapter the First: The Trip That Never Was

2023: Sandra Bond
Chapter 5: Pemmi-Con, Winnipeg, 19-23 July 2023

Appendix
Acknowledgements
Original Appearances
Index by Winner

Introduction

David Langford

> The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular *[science fiction]* fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. TAFF exists solely through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted on by interested fans all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation [...] These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what make TAFF possible.

Thus the traditional wording of the TAFF ballot form. Very much more information on TAFF and its long history can be found at taff.org.uk, from which this and other free ebooks may be downloaded. See also TAFF in Thirteen Paragraphs, below.

A long-standing tradition of TAFF is that returned winners administer the fund until replaced by their successor from the same side of the Atlantic and *if possible* write a substantial trip report, both for sale in aid of the fund and for the entertainment and edification of fandom. This tradition goes back to before TAFF itself began. A special fund was organized to bring Walt Willis from Ireland to the USA and the World SF Convention in 1952 (an initiative which led directly to the founding of TAFF), and his report *The Harp Stateside* is regarded as a classic of fan writing.

Many TAFF winners since then have likewise published full-length trip reports. Two were unable to make the journey and had nothing to report on. Some were waylaid by the horrors of real life and failed even to begin a report; some published instalments in fanzines but didn't finish. This ebook collects the reports that at the time of publication remain incomplete, or consist of notes for an intended full report, or are so brief that they couldn't plausibly be published as a standalone fanzine in the tradition of *The Harp Stateside*. Nevertheless there's a lot of fine fan writing here.

Below is the list of TAFF winners by year, marked (W) or (E) for

westbound (Europe to North America) or eastbound (North America to Europe) trips, with a note on any resulting report. Walt Willis's pre-TAFF trip is also included. All completed trip reports are available as free ebooks, PDF downloads or (rarely) POD paperbacks from taff.org.uk.

- 1952: Walt Willis (W) – *The Harp Stateside* (1957); also partial draft as *The Harp at Chicon*
- 1954: Vince Clarke (W) – could not make the trip.
- 1955: Ken Bulmer (W) – *TAFF Tales* (1998)
- 1956: Lee Hoffman (E) – declined TAFF funds and travelled at her own expense; no report.
- 1957: Robert A. Madle (E) – *A Fake Fan In London* (1976)
- 1958: Ron Bennett (W) – *Colonial Excursion* (1961)
- 1959: Don Ford (E) – *TAFF Baedeker* (two parts: 1960, 1961)
- 1960: Eric Bentcliffe (W) – *Epitaff* (1961)
- 1961: Ron Ellik (E) – *The Squirrel's Tale* (1969)
- 1962: Ethel Lindsay (W) – The Lindsay Report (1963)
- 1963: Wally Weber (E) – in this ebook
- 1964: Arthur "Atom" Thomson – *Atom Abroad* (1965)
- 1965: Terry Carr – in this ebook
- 1966: Thomas Schlück – no report traced
- 1968: Steve Stiles (E) – *Harrison Country* (2007)
- 1969: Eddie Jones (W) – no report
- 1970: Elliot K. Shorter (E) – in this ebook
- 1971: Mario Bosnyak (W) – no report
- 1973: Len and June Moffatt (E) – *The Moffatt House Abroad* (1974)
- 1974: Peter Weston (W) – in this ebook
- 1976: Roy Tackett, Bill Bowers (tie) (E) – Tackett is in this ebook; Bowers could not make the trip
- 1977: Peter Roberts (W) – *New Routes In America* (1999)
- 1979: Terry Hughes (E) – in this ebook
- 1980: Dave Langford (W) – *The Transatlantic Hearing Aid* (1985)
- 1981: Stu Shiffman (E) – in this ebook
- 1982: Kevin Smith (W) – *Nothing* (2022)
- 1983: Avedon Carol (E) – in this ebook
- 1984: Rob Hansen (W) – *On The TAFF Trail* (1994)
- 1985: Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden (E) – in this ebook
- 1986: Greg Pickersgill (W) – no report but in this ebook nevertheless
- 1987: Jeanne Gomoll (E) – *TAFForensic Report: A Cold-Case Investigation* (2020)

- 1988: Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake (W) – in this ebook
- 1989: Robert Lichtman (E) – in this ebook
- 1991: Pam Wells (W) – in this ebook
- 1992: Jeanne Bowman (E) – in this ebook
- 1993: Abigail Frost (W) – in this ebook
- 1995: Dan Steffan (E) – in this ebook
- 1996: Martin Tudor (W) – *Have Bag, Will Travel* (1998)
- 1998: Ulrika O'Brien (E) – in progress; one chapter in this ebook; *see below*
- 1998: Maureen Kincaid Speller (W) – in this ebook
- 1999: Velma "Vijay" Bowen (E) – no report
- 2000: Sue Mason (W) – *Into the Wide Purple Yonder: A Fan Artist in America* (2024)
- 2001: Victor Gonzalez (E) – no report
- 2002: Tobes Valois (W) – *Tobes Taff Ting* (2005)
- 2003: Randy Byers (E) – in this ebook
- 2005: James Bacon (W) – *WorldConNomicon* (2005)
- 2005: Suzanne Tompkins (Suzle) (E) – *Jerry's Suzle's 2005 TAFF Trip Report* (2009)
- 2006: Bridget Bradshaw (W) – no report
- 2008: Chris Garcia (E) – *Rockets Across the Waters* (2008)
- 2009: Steve Green (W) – in this ebook
- 2010: Brian Gray and Anne K.G. Murphy (now Anne Gray) (E) – in progress; one chapter in this ebook; *see below*
- 2011: John Coxon (W) – *Best. Trip. Ever.* (2020)
- 2012: Jacq Monahan (E) – *Same Planet Different World: Jacq's TAFF Adventure in the UK* (2017)
- 2013: Jim Mowatt (W) – *Wherever I Lay My Hat!* (2018)
- 2014: Curt Phillips (E) – in progress; one chapter in this ebook; *see below*
- 2015: Nina Horvath (W) – *see below*
- 2016: Anna Raftery (W) – *Cuttlefish and Cake* (2021)
- 2017: John Purcell (E) – in progress with many chapters published; one sample chapter in this ebook; *see below*
- 2018: Johan Anglemark (W) – *see below*
- 2019: Geri Sullivan (E) – *see below*
- 2020: Michael Lowrey (E) – in progress; one chapter in this ebook; *see below*
- 2022: Fia Karlsson (W) – *see below*
- 2023: Sandra Bond (W) – in progress; one chapter in this ebook; *see*

below

- 2024: Sarah Gulde (E) – *see below*

What's all this "*see below*"? Recent TAFF winners deserve a breathing space to start or finish working on their trip reports – if perhaps not the 43 years it took for Ken Bulmer's 1955 report instalments to be gathered together at last as a single publication, or the 39 years before Steve Stiles finally completed his 1968 report. Therefore in the original plan for this anthology, winners who'd barely had time to begin, or had published partial reports and were still actively adding to them, were given a free pass. However, Ulrika O'Brien (1988), Randy Byers (2003), Anne and Brian Gray (2010), John Coxon (2011), Jim Mowatt (2013) and Curt Phillips (2014) all liked the idea of a single teaser chapter appearing here, and were duly represented in the 2017 edition.

Since 2017, the situation has of course changed. John Coxon, Jeanne Gomoll and Jim Mowatt have published their complete TAFF reports, available as free downloads from the TAFF library at taff.org.uk, and agree there's no need for sample chapters in the new edition of this anthology. Other completed reports such as Kevin Smith's, Sue Mason's and Anna Raftery's have been added to the list above. A newly unearthed Greg Pickersgill chapter (about him rather than by him, as was his master plan) is now included. Randy Byers, alas, died in 2017; this revised ebook adds the remaining solo portions of his unfinished report. Further sample chapters from reports in progress are included by kind permission of John Purcell (2017), Michael Lowrey (2020) and Sandra Bond (2023).

Now read on....

David Langford
March 2025

TAFF in Thirteen Paragraphs

Teresa and Patrick Nielsen Hayden

At its simplest, TAFF can be explained in as much text as it takes to fill one side of a sheet of paper; optimistically, the TAFF ballot does just that, starting with "The – Trans-Atlantic – Fan – Fund – was – created – in – 1953 – for – the – purpose – of – providing – funds – to – bring – fans – who – are – well – known – and – popular – in – both – sides – fandoms – across – that – ocean," squeezing who may vote, how to vote, how the votes are counted, where the money comes from, what the winner does Over There, and all the rest, winding up with the traditional annual plea to make checks payable to the administrator. Since fandom sees this document every year – and since, if Brian* just wanted the basic info, he doubtless had a ballot to hand and could have just copied it – we won't recite it all here.

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* Brian Earl Brown, for whose special TAFF issue of *Sticky Quarters* this was written. *[Ed.]*

Beyond this point, explanations get more complicated. For instance, you could easily fill four pages with statements of what TAFF is and isn't. Like, it's not quite a merit award, though it recognizes merit somewhat; it's not quite an ambassadorship, or a commission to See All and Report Back, or a free-for-all elective Fan Guest of Honour-ship... though in some ways it's all of those things. When the sending country decides to stamp, address and mail a particular fan, the reasons are many and subtle: ultimately, the votes are counted, the winner is announced, and the reasons are guessed at afterwards.

As if that weren't enough indeterminacy, TAFF is also decided by the host country's votes, for reasons that are similar and yet different. Basically, they boil down to curiosity: there's someone who's extending himself or herself toward them in some way; they've heard stories, perhaps they've seen what that fan is like in print. And they want to find out what he or she is like in person. Also, to be quite honest about it, the normal human tendency to speculate about how candidates Ferdi, Bozo, or Lulu would react to a particular group – that impulse that leads us to introduce one of our friends to another friend whose interests they seem to share, or to wonder what would happen if the local church youth group invited Gore

Vidal to speak at a meeting – is also present, for whatever motives you care to imagine. Doubtless it varies with the candidates.

Maybe TAFF is best described (and try to think of this as though it were science fiction) as a sort of treaty, kind of, between two working anarchies, to send quasi-official-mostly-visitors-without-portfolio back and forth to each other at regular intervals, more or less, further details subject to individual opinion. (If this seems inadequate, try defining any other major fannish institution, then test your definition on a largish roomful of fans. See how many agree with your precise wording and interpretation. We dare you.)

End digital, begin analogue explanation. In its Basic Cosmic Essence, TAFF is really about communications, and the enhancement – by injecting specific fans into new fannish social situations – of the whole fannish *gestalt* both here and there. New model alert: think of fandom as a network or networks, multiply connected in some places, sparely connected in others. The British-to-North-America axis is an opportunity point where encouraging the formation of even a few new connections, nexus to nexus, vastly increases the total multigenerational linkages. Like, sharing the experience, you know? Or maybe like Leibnitz's pinballs. And whether or not a TAFF winner actually produces a conventional report, fifty pages or so of trip narrative, is almost secondary. The real question is, does the trip result in more fanac? Does the fannish universe get bigger and more interesting somehow? If:yes:good. Narrative trip reports are one way of spreading the word; slide shows at conventions (*vide* Rusty Hevelin after his DUFF trip) are another. Simple interpersonal bridge-building – the ideal being that a TAFF winner, on returning home, should keep up all those new contacts, pass on comments and observations, not to mention gossip and news – shouldn't be underestimated; its potential influence is vast.

North American and British fandoms *are* two different cultures (the obvious being not necessarily untrue, as the saying runs, and useful to remember once in a while). But even knowing this in advance won't tell you where the differences are. That's where the suggestion comes in that the mechanics of TAFF be thought of as a treaty, a body of understanding that exists between two different opinion-forming communities. Both fandoms are capable of being surprisingly prickly over issues they see as important but which the other may never even have thought of.

Negotiations and compromise have to come into play, since trying to force fans to do anything is like trying to push a length of string; as in everything else fannish we have to trust each others' intentions or give up

trying on the spot. It's not an impossible task – a tribute to the soundness of TAFF is that in thirty-one years, and in spite of a few dust-ups, its basic ideals and forms have remained largely unchanged, and still work pretty well. Fandom's been the better for it.

•

Since we just practised typing "trust" and "trip report", this seems like the time to throw in a quick plea. There's something of a tendency for TAFF winners to gafiate immediately upon their return home – recent notable cases of this being Peter Roberts and Kevin Smith; Terry Hughes, it's good to see you back again – and while our case of TAFFluenza was milder, they have our deepest sympathies. We had a wonderful time in Britain, and it was unbelievably exhausting, besides being a heavy burden on our mundane resources and commitments. Checking around reveals that this is the normal aftermath of a fan-fund trip. So be kind to your local TAFF-wreck; a lot of fannish current has been run through one small individual fuse box. Besides, they'll probably recover someday and degafiate, having of course spent the vast majority of the elapsed time meditating upon their transatlantic experience, the better to write them up for your leisurely delectation.

•

Having got all that out of the way, the temptation to go on for a while about what TAFF *isn't* seems irresistible. So:

TAFF is not a charity for poor fans, as if more than a few of us were anything but. There's no means test for candidates (the half of the N'American administration that used to work in university Financial Aid turns pale at the thought of having to apply one), and loud public debates about whether Bonzo or Lulu could "really" afford to go if they'd make some unspecified sacrifices (mortgage, car payments, education, health care, job?) are distasteful; also, bound to be somewhat underinformed. TAFF is an *honour*, and if *in a TAFF winner's own opinion* he or she can afford to pay some of the trip expenses while accepting the honour of being the TAFF visitor... that's real spiff. If not, that's still real spiff. Their decision either way, and no second-guessing them.

TAFF isn't, or shouldn't be, a forum for settling other scores. There have been times when people who've been asked to stand for TAFF have put off doing so because someone they can't abide is already in the race. Not an ideal situation, but it's better than an acrimonious race; candidates stand *for* TAFF, not *against* each other. For an ideal race, try Dave Langford and Jim Barker in 1980. Not only did they nominate each other, the two co-edited a special oneshot that was sold to raise money for the

fund. Bravo all 'round, bring on the dancing girls throwing flowers.

TAFF shouldn't be yet another forum for endless constitutionalist points; that's what the Worldcon Business Meeting is for. As is sensible, the fund has rules and precedents, but a study of its overall history reveals that these have been interpreted both consistently and with consistent flexibility. Further study reveals two more things. First, even with the most inventive interpretation the rules and guidelines are so simple and basic – they barely cover How To Do It – that there's not much profit in pursuing their fine points past functionality and common sense. Secondly, any given administrator is utterly vulnerable to current fannish consensus – while, again, you can't force a fan into anything, enough pressure can make them pretty miserable – so it's a real piece of overkill to address some disagreement over administrative practice as though you were setting out to impeach the President. An amiable letter, though, will get you an amiable response.

Ultimately, TAFF comes out of that old ideal of a participating fannish community. Structurally it can accommodate participation by hundreds more people than usually vote these days, but there's a potential pitfall there. TAFF is simple in theory, and subtle and complex in practice. Any amount of participation is fine so long as those participants are genuinely interested in some kind of transatlantic fannish community: TAFF belongs to *everyone* who cares about what TAFF is about. But an impersonal Transatlantic Fan Fund – TAFF at a distance, TAFF as an abstract institution – is self-contradictory, and won't fly. (Actually it's nice how it works out. Being interested in TAFF – the whole structure, not just a given race – automatically makes you part of the TAFF constituency. Not giving beans for the institution means you can quite happily ignore it. All very tidy, usually. Anarchist theoreticians, take note.)

Will TAFF survive? Oh, probably. Fandom as a community based on good-natured cooperation and trust isn't dead yet, despite the inexpensive *frisson* of Oh Alarm Oh Panic Ring All The Bells Turn On The Siren Get Out The Jello Oh What A Big Deal This Is which we all get from observing, from time to time, that the sky is falling. That may be fun for a while, but it won't get you love and egoboo. Those you get only by pressing them on to others first, along with a modicum of understanding that goes with them: a better game altogether.

Sticky Quarters #13, November 1985

1963: Wally Weber

Wally Weber attended the 1964 UK Eastercon in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (also known as RePetercon, as the second Eastercon in that venue). The rival candidates were Marion Z. Bradley and Bruce E. Pelz. Wally Weber died in 2025.

Platform

Wally cannot be summarized in 100 words. Maybe you've met him? (Eleven Worldcons, five Westercons; 1961 Worldcon Chairman *and* Treasurer.) Fanwritings? Letterhacked in *Planet*, *TWS*, *Spacewarp* (reader/accumulator of prozines since 1947). Assumed *Cry* publication 1951; edits lettercol since 1959. Also general- and apa-zines; thrice rated SAPSpoll top humorist. Charter (1949) Nameless Ones members: president twice; now "permanent" Secretary-Treasurer. NFFF member from 1958, participating type. Single-phrasedly inspired Ella Parker's Pond Tour to SeaCon, 1961. Ella demands rematch (see below). Enough of statistics about your Fabulous Candidate. England needs Wally Weber (we need him back, of course).

Nominated by: Ella Parker, Madeleine Willis, Don Franson, Bill Donaho, F.M. Busby.

Cry Abroad

A TAFF Report Synopsis

Wally Weber

Hang on readers; we're about to do a four week tour in two pages. The non-stop flight from Seattle to London (or from March 18, 1964 to March 19, 1964, if you want to look at it from the fourth dimension) was pleasant and quick. London's Heathrow Airport looked freshly built for the occasion and, like most of the new construction I was to find in England, looked like any newly built fantastically expensive Stateside building. Realizing that Ella Parker would be at work on Thursday until late afternoon, I loitered for some time at the airport, then spent the rest of the day sightseeing in London. Around 7 o'clock I finally called Ella and was informed, as only Ella can inform, that she had skipped work that day to be on hand when I arrived.

To rectify this, the first mistake I've ever made in my whole life, I arranged to meet her for lunch on Friday. I shrewdly arrived an hour early and, discovering she was not there, naturally assumed I had been too late. At least I was spacing my blunders one day apart.

Friday night I witnessed one of Ella's weekly fan gatherings. She has the fans trained for neatness. For example, when Langdon Jones saw tea about to be spilled, he immediately threw himself under the falling drops to protect Ella's rug. Fans visiting Ella seem to have a fierce desire to survive.

In the interests of surviving, I tried to leave for Ireland on Saturday, March 21st, but the flights were all booked. I ended up taking a flight that left so early on Sunday morning that Ella had to go without sleep all night to be sure to get me up in time for it. You could tell, I was making life very interesting for Ella.

Walt Willis and family met me at the airport near Belfast and immediately took me on a tour of the major attractions of Northern Ireland including a quarter-of-a-million-dollar wastebasket, the giant Potato Crisp industry, and the modern M-1 super-highway.

After spending a few days with John Berry (exploring a castle, playing billiards with coins, looking over space stamps, playing records,

sightseeing, and swilling Guinness because it is good for me), I returned to the Willis home. There I got to see one of the world's most interesting paper hangers since Adolph Hitler, marvel over fannish artifacts in the attic, attend a gathering of those famous Irish fans you've all read about (send now for my unexpurgated report), and witness a suspenseful procedure for acquiring airplane tickets back to London.

Eventually Madeleine and I ran away to London together, but Walt followed us after seeing his daughter safe in the hospital, and Thursday night, March 26 found Walt, Madeleine, Ethel Lindsay, Ella and myself trying to get some sleep in preparation for the Peterborough convention which was to begin the next day,

Friday morning fans gathered at the train. Arthur Thomson pushed us on our way, and soon we were checked in at the Bull Hotel in Peterborough.

The convention was about thirty fans too big for the meeting room, but they fit quite well in the corridors. Ted Tubb, the Guest of Honour, attempted to subdue his untamed wit in honour of his dignified position, but much to my delight he failed more times than he succeeded. Ethel went about as though she thought she should be worrying about how the program was going (she seemed to be in charge of it), but the programming was so light – the way fans like – that she finally gave up trying to worry. Probably everything was an anti-climax to her anyway after her disastrous attempt to interview James White earlier in the convention.

Ed Hamilton and Leigh Brackett were present, drawing considerable attention away from the TAFF delegate, which I thought was pretty rotten of them. Ted Forsyth divided his time between auctioneering and shooting flash pictures.

Ron Bennett lost his voice during the convention, a fate worse than death for him. Aub Marks, Harry Nadler and Tom Holt drew cheers and much appreciation from everyone for their well-done movies. They promised more such films for the London World con next year. The costume party was overcrowded, as were all the major con events, but very enjoyable, also as were all the major con events. Tony Walsh, the convention's able chairman, wore a spaceship costume so elaborate that the judges, in the course of their duties, were confounded to learn at one point that Tony had stepped out for a breath of air and they were judging an empty costume. Being Chairman, he wouldn't have been eligible for a prize anyway.

The convention ended far too soon, and early Monday morning

("early" means "before noon") I left with Terry, Val, Pauline and Sandra Jeeves. The trip to Sheffield was an introduction to such interesting subjects as Soggy-approved restaurants, lamb-herding, and expecting car trouble without actually having any.

After leaving a quote card in the menu of a Chinese restaurant in Sheffield – something about crottled greeps I believe (remind me to tell you about the Liverpool Group and their quote-cards someday) – we drove to the Jeeves' home where I met Bonnie (dog-type) and eventually Keith (boy-type). Bonnie stood up to meeting the fabulous TAFF delegate quite well, but Keith left for Europe the next day.

Wednesday, April 1, Terry and his family were starting their vacation to Southport, and they dropped me at Eric Bentcliffe's home near Manchester on their way. In addition to such assets as his wife, Beryl, and girl-child, Lindsay, Eric has some great fannish tapes and much knowledge of British fandom. Yes, there was much enjoyable listening to do at the Bentcliffe home – a new and beautiful home, too – and that night when I went to my room I found two of the many quote cards that were following me around the country since the PeterCon; these said, "PSNEER" and "STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND".

Friday, April 3, Eric managed to overcome my natural talent for getting lost, and I found the right train to Birmingham. From all the construction going on, it looked like Birmingham was just being built. Since I still wasn't convinced that my TAFF trip was real, the thought occurred that the trip really was a hoax and I made the Birmingham set before the scenery had been finished.

Saturday, April 4, a bus delivered me at Ken Cheslin's place in Stourbridge, throwing Ken into his normal state of confusion. Ken had been elected BSFA President at Peterborough, and the 1965 Easter convention was to be held in Birmingham, so Ken was all covered with responsibility and duties. He shrugged them off, however, and spent the next couple days showing me scenery, history, fans, games, Archie Mercer, and a truly magnificent break in billiards. Tony and Simone Walsh miraculously located us in the tavern during the billiards game, and before the evening was over another ever-present quote card turned up, which happened to have Norm Shorrock's address on the back. We all signed it, Tony found a stamp small enough to fit on the tiny card, and promised to mail it.

Monday, April 6 I was in Liverpool to attend the Monday evening meeting of the Liverpool Group. Their clubroom is absolutely unbelievable, but then so is the Liverpool Group. After a session of wine-

tasting to get into the fannish meeting mood, a moderately wild official meeting took place during which I was appointed Seattle Chapter of the Liverpool Group. Little did we know then....

Tuesday, April 7th, I visited with Ron Bennett, who had his voice back and no longer had to communicate with the quote cards, and in the evening we watched a – well, Ron called it football, but I don't know. Football *game* I mean.

Wednesday, April 8th, I had some weird notion of going to Ipswich, but I didn't want to leave as early as the train did, so about ten o'clock at night (about the time England rolls its streets up disappears until dawn) I was once again calling Mother Parker to ask for shelter. "Weber, you've got a stinking cold!" she said in her sweet way, and it was all arranged.

There followed a week in London doing indescribable things, like visiting transient managers of Worldcon hotels, attending Friday night sessions at Ella's and meetings of the Science Fiction Club of London, seeing American movies, and buying Beatles records.

Obviously the whole trip was a hoax, just as I suspected all along.

Cry of the Nameless #174, June 1964

1965: Terry Carr

Terry Carr attended the 1965 London Worldcon, Loncon II. The rival candidates were Bill Donaho and Jock Root. Terry Carr died in 1987.

Platform

Since entering fandom in the late 1940s via the prozine letter columns and the Golden Gate Futurian Society, Terry has been a serious collector, clubfan, humorist, reviewer, carouser, con-committee member, satirist, and columnist. He co-edited *Fanac*, the news zine that won the 1959 Hugo, as well as publishing *Innuendo* and other fanzines too humorous to mention. Today, in New York, he works closely with his old friend science fiction as Associate Editor of Ace Books – and writes it on the side, while still remaining active in fandom. He might claim you could find a better TAFFman – but you couldn't.

Nominated by: Walt Willis, Peter Mabey, Tom Perry, Avram Davidson, and Redd Boggs.

Beyond the Mnemonic Statute of Limitations

Terry Carr

I take it that Stu and Larry were chiding me, in the lettercol, for not taking notes during my TAFFtrip and thus never writing my TAFF report. *sigh* It didn't seem so important at the time to take notes, since I assumed I'd be able to remember everything with utmost clarity anyhow – I remembered that I'd written my 20,000-word con-report on the 1958 worldcon, "I Heard the Beat of Fannish Drums", three months later with nary a single note, and that was complete with lots of pretty much verbatim conversations. I used to have a remarkable memory for such things, and still have sometimes – but for some reason it wasn't operating during the 1965 worldcon where I was TAFF delegate. Actually, maybe it was, but the mnemonic statute of limitations ran out while I was busy with pro work during the several months afterward, so that by the time I had a change to consider writing about the trip and con I found my memories pretty blank. Horrorshock!

Just for you, I'll tell you now everything I remember about that TAFFtrip, so you'll see what you didn't miss. Carol and I began it by flying to Paris, where we rendezvoused with Ron Ellik, AL Lewis, Boyd Raeburn, and Lois Lavender, who'd been touring France for a couple of weeks already; we spent several days touristing around Paris with them, visiting the Louvre and so forth. One night we visited a three-star restaurant and I had my first taste of meurseault, a white wine that I loved even though I still can't spell it. Afterward, we repaired to Carol's and my room to drink a bottle that Ron had bought earlier, but when he tried to open it using a device that pops out the cork by injecting gas beneath it, the whole bottle broke and we had to end the evening early. In the next couple of days we touristed with Boyd alone, the others having gone before us to London, and mainly I remember waiting on a chilly afternoon while Boyd photographed some statues in The Tuileries; Boyd took a lot of time getting his light-readings and such right and I, shivering, swore a mighty oath ("By Ghu!") that his pictures had better be worth it. (They were; Boyd sent them to us later and they're now in one of our photo albums.)

Thence we went to London by train, passing through many fields of

French produce, mostly grapes, though I was pleased when we stopped at Amiens, where Jules Verne's tomb is, according to what I've read in ancient Gernsback magazines. We didn't have time to get out and look, though; we continued to the French coast and took a boat to the white cliffs of Dover, which really are, and thence went by train to London, where Carol and I stayed with Arthur and Olive Thomson for a day or two and Arthur showed us around London; we went on a trip on the Thames, for instance, and I remember Arthur's marvelous impression of a cockney's directions around London: "You take the Firty-free bus," etc. That night there was a small party at Ethel Lindsay's place where Ron Ellik said many hilarious things none of which I remember, and Arthur did the same with ditto memory results, and we heard lots of gossip about then current London fan politics, all of which I forgot almost immediately. It was hilarious, though, I assure you.

The night before the con we went pub-crawling with Arthur and Olive, eventually running into several fan types (by plan, I think) in one of them. I remember standing foot on rail when Mike Moorcock introduced himself and insisted on buying me a pint even though he was in his scuffling days then. We talked about the time a few years before when he was scripting the British *Tarzan* comic book or some such and Tuckerized Dave Rike as one of the characters; Mike also mumbled and muttered, in that way he had even then, about London fan and pro factions – the New Wave was just getting started in 1965 – and I never did get straight just who hated whom or why, except that everyone seemed to hate Charles Platt. *Plus ça change...*

Next day, Carol and I moved to the con hotel and got caught up in the hurlyburly of an international worldcon, meeting old friends from the States and new ones from England, and things went fast and furiously thereafter; it's all a blur in my memory and I think it was even at the time. As a recent TAFF winner wrote to me, it's a "pain in the ass, remembering the names of all these foreigners," and that difficulty must certainly be one reason many TAFF reports were never completed or often even begun.

I do remember that Carol and I hosted a big party in our room one night, assisted by Pete Graham, whose room was one floor beneath ours, just down a flight of stairs nearby; we made several trips back and forth bringing booze and ice, and the party was a rouser. I have no idea who was there or what was said by anyone. Another night, we were invited to a party outside the hotel at someone's flat, given by Charles Platt and friends (Langdon Jones, etc., I think); we didn't want to take sides in the London factionalism, so Carol and Pete and I went. The attendees were all scruffy

and dourly jocular, and Charles was – dare I say it? – both charming and thoughtful to us. But we hardly knew anyone there (the attendees probably included Chris Priest, but I didn't know who he was at the time), so we mostly talked among ourselves or with the one or two others we knew. At some point during the party Pete behaved outrageously, as was his wont in those days, baiting and putting on various people (he probably claimed he was Robert A. Heinlein), and an altercation nearly developed; Carol and I took Pete away, all of us giggling senselessly.

Next morning at the con there was a panel scheduled for 9:00 a.m. that included Bob Silverberg; despite a great effort on my part, I missed all but the last ten minutes of it. Afterward I asked Bob how he managed to be coherent at that time of morning at a worldcon and he just said, "It's not as hard as you imagine – remember that all of the audience is just as sleepy as you are."

And there was the night I walked the long halls of the con hotel in search of Mal Ashworth, who was reputed to be among the hordes at the con; Arthur or Mike or somebody led me on this fruitless quest. Mal was not there; he'd gone quite gafia at the time. But we stalked the halls for hours, drunkenly, and became more so as we visited party after party. I remember the halls at that con hotel as being about two blocks long, like some scene from *Last Year at Marienbad* – I think the hotel had been enlarged by combining with another and knocking out the walls between them. Late at night and under worldcon conditions, those halls were like some surreal slice of cinematic life, endless and filled with enigmatic happenings. Can you wonder that I don't remember the details of the nights?

I remember even less of the days, which were filled with the panels and speeches that clutter my memories of thirty years of worldcons. I attended many of them and probably was on one or two myself, but memory says nought. I do remember inviting every former TAFF delegate at the con to a summit meeting at which we discussed TAFF policy and especially the next TAFF election; it was at that meeting that I proposed "Hold Over Funds" as a choice on all ballots (thereby anticipating No Award by several years), and most people agreed to it. At that time, even as now, some people were worried that there might not be a qualified TAFF candidate to be found; but though the "Hold Over Funds" option has appeared on every TAFF ballot since then we've never yet failed to find a candidate to elect. Someone took a photo of the attendees at this meeting and I still have a print of it: it shows all of us, with spouses, crammed onto one bed (no, no, it wasn't that kind of party!): Ron Bennett, Ethel Lindsay,

Wally Weber, Ken and Pamela Bulmer, Arthur and Olive Thomson, Carol and me, Walt Willis, and all the other TAFF winners up to that time except Don Ford, who wasn't there. I suppose it's a Historic photo; I'd planned to put it on the cover of my TAFF report, but of course I never wrote that.

At the Hugo banquet later that day, I sat next to Brian Aldiss up front: he was the Pro GoH and I was Fan GoH. I was terrified by the prospect of having to make a speech, however short: I'd never done that before at a con. I barely touched my food, whatever it was, and Brian was wonderful in the way he chatted with me to calm me down. Forry Ackerman*, the toastmaster, stood up and said, "I'm delighted to have Brian Aldiss here as Guest of Honour, but I wish the late E.E. Evans could be here with him... so I could say that we had Aldiss and Evans too." The attendees groaned, even as I did, but for different reasons: I was thinking that that lousy pun was probably better than anything I had to say. Forry introduced Brian, who gave a polished speech none of which I remember (I was too busy trying to keep from throwing up from nervousness), and then Forry introduced me.

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* A lapse of memory: the toastmaster who spoke the quoted words was not Ackerman but Tom Boardman, and likewise in the next pararaph. *[Ed.]*

I have no idea what words of praise Forry used; I was too twitchy by then even to listen to egoboo, and could only sit there wishing Forry would make endless puns till the whole audience went away. But he didn't, and I had to get up and make my speech. I'd written it out beforehand, and even practiced it once or twice, but I was still terrified. When I began talking the microphone failed and somebody had to fix it; I prayed that it would dissolve and we could all go home, but that didn't happen, and there I was before the whole convention audience who waited for me to speak.

Astonishingly, I managed. I even ad-libbed an opening – something that insulted Dave Kyle's bid for next year's worldcon in Buffalo, New York and got several laughs; I think I said, "Next year we'll be in Cleveland unless we get lost and go to Buffalo" – and then I went into my prepared speech. I delivered it almost word-for-word from my text, and since I've managed to save my script to this day, I can reproduce my TAFF speech here:

> One of the most accepted manners of beginning a talk as a banquet seems to be to open with An Anecdote, or A Quotation, which should either be about or by a famous person, and which should preferably be funny. If it isn't, no matter – the only

function of this opener is to catch the attention of the members of the audience, who have until this point been having a good time listening to the *talented* speaker before you or, more enjoyable still, talking among themselves, which is what people come to speech-sessions for anyway. (That's what *I* came for, at any rate, and I was having a fine time until I had to interrupt myself by coming up here and booming over the microphone like a mathematics lecturer with a cold who'd misplaced his decibels.)

Well, I'd love to start off with An Anecdote or A Quotation involving a famous person, but the trouble is that whenever I try something like that I either get the story wrong or I misquote the famous person or I forget who the story was about or the quotation by in the first place. It happened to me earlier this afternoon, as a matter of fact, when I was telling a story and I came to the punchline and it just *flew* away from me, completely forgotten. It's a rather dread disease which I call aphasiastic flu.

There is one quotation I suppose I could give you accurately, however. The story goes that Louella Parsons once waxed lyrical in on of her columns, and wrote, "*Oh to be in England, now that it's May.*" I can quote this line because of course it's a misquotation in itself, so I'm in tune with it.

Oh to be in England, now that it's May... or even August, the time of the world convention. Worldcons are a marvelous institution, combining as they do the most prominent features of a circus, a Roman orgy, a meeting of the National Society for Antiquarian Beekeepers (keepers of antiquarian bees, I suppose), a debate in the House of Lords, and dinner in an automat.

Over the years they've developed a number of traditional features: the costume ball, for instance, and of course the banquet and the talk on What's Wrong with Science Fiction This Year (it's Ted White this year – I mean he's the one who's giving the talk); and the Introduction of Notables, a sort of name-dropping session in reverse – in this case the Names are asked to rise, and some of them, depending on what they were doing the night before, are even able to; the Ceremony of and ancient and mystical order of the Knights of St. Fantony (Not a Religious Organization); and, of course, the Business Session, where fans from all over the world gather to discuss in democratic fashion the matter of who can raise the greatest

number of points-of-order.

Oh to be in England, now that it's worldcon time...

And you see the most mad assortment of people at world conventions: the hurried, harried committeemen, constantly looking at their watches as though they were rushing off to a meeting with the Red Queen; the sharp-nosed editors, sniffing for new talent, and the vodka-gimlet-eyed authors in the bar; Old Guard fans sitting in corners and grumbling that science fiction hasn't been the same since G. Peyton Wertenbaker, or Polton Cross, or Kendell Foster Crossen, or Joan the Wad, depending on just how Old Guard they are; the newer fans – the New Wave or Second Deluge or something like that – violently agreeing with each other, like Ayn Rand acolytes discussing objectivism, full of sound and fury, simplifying everything; hucksters hawking, panelists talking, neofans gawking. And there are, somewhere around here no doubt, the inevitable Gentlemen from the Press, who want to find out where we think the flying saucers come from now that Mars has been ruled out; writers, editors and fans who have been nominated for Hugos and who wish to God I'd get this talk over with so we could get on to the presentations – some of these nominees, in fact, may have made the trip to the convention only because they are on the ballot: tough most of the attendees have interests that are more catholic, these nominees might be called Hugonauts.

And, I'm afraid, we have among us the inevitable TAFF representative, who in this case is me.

Most of you know that TAFF is the Transatlantic Fan Fund, a sort of science fictional cultural exchange program that sends fans across the ocean alternately to conventions in the United States and those in England. It's a system by which fans can get to know in person other fans widely separated from them geographically – and, to some extent, culturally. Fans from this side of the Atlantic have made such discoveries in the United States as the fact that it's *big* over there; that there are several other kinds of Americans besides cowboys, Chicago gangsters and Dave Kyle; that science fiction fandom over there is bewilderingly varied but uniformly hospitable to visitors; and that despite all, it's good to see Britain when they come home again. Similarly, Stateside fans have discovered in England that places are so handily *close* around here – I could get to Scotland

in the time it's sometimes taken me to drive across Los Angeles – that the British aren't all Beatles, butlers or Bennett; that fandom over there is bewilderingly varied but uniformly hospitable to visitors; and that despite all, it's good to see the United States when they get home.

This year I'm the one who got the nod to make the TAFF trip. I've been having a wonderful time, and I want to thank each and every one of you.

And speaking of TAFF elections, we're going to have another one in the next few months....

At which point I formally announced the opening of nominations for the next election, explained the new "Hold Over Funds" option, and sat down. The speech had drawn some laughs in most of the right places, but I'd noticed that they all came from either the first few rows in front or the last few in back; I was told later that the PA system hadn't been working quite properly, so that only those near the rear speakers had gotten the benefit of the microphone, and, since I tend to speak softly, only those near the very front had heard my voice unaided by the speakers – so even if you were there that afternoon, this may be the first time you've had to find out what I said.

Walt Willis, who'd been sitting near the back with Chuch Harris, had a somewhat different theory, as I discovered later when he showed me the notebook in which he'd been exchanging written comments with Chuch, who's deaf. Chuch had written, "What's happening? Only a few people seem to be laughing," and Walt had replied, "Terry's making puns that are too sophisticated for them." I wish Walt had been right.

Mentioning Chuch Harris reminds me of what happened when I first met him a day or two earlier. We were on an elevator, just getting off at some floor, and next to the elevator was an automatic shoeshine machine. Chuch said, "Look – an electric neofan!"

After the banquet, which was on the last day of the con, things began to wind down rapidly. Carol and I ended up the evening in Judy Merril's room where she held the dead-dog party at which occurred the conversation about Judy's forthcoming meeting with J.G. Ballard of which I wrote a letter in *Raffles* 7.5: Sid Coleman saying, "The first line will be Ballard saying, 'Fuck off. Call me Ishmael.'" That party lasted throughout the night, and at dawn Willis said, "I can see the rising sun coming through a chink in the curtains." Forry said, "Ah yes... the Yellow Peril." I marveled at Forry's quickness with a pun until I realized that Walt must have deliberately set him up for it. Walt's fondness for Forry, in part

because of their mutual admiration for puns, had been demonstrated for me.

After the con, according to plan, Carol and I and Ted White went to Northern Ireland with Walt, where we stayed with him and Madeleine (who hadn't been at the con) for several days and were joined in due course by Pete Graham, who went by himself to Belfast and bicycled around a bit before he joined us at Walt and Madeleine's house in Donaghadee on the second day. We were all gathered on the Willis's front lawn (which Carol had dubbed The Gloating Sward because of its splendid view of the Irish Sea) when Pete rode up to us and Carol, who picks up accents quickly and subconsciously, said, "Hi Pete!" he viewed her with jaundiced eye and said, "Oh, come off it."

Walt and Madeleine, the Shaws and the James Whites took us around the local sites of interest, including the hill Bob and Walt had in mind when they wrote *The Enchanted Duplicator*, a ruined castle or two (we have nostalgic photos of Walt and varied others among the tumbled stones), and a small forest part that was by U.S. standards, little more than a stand of trees. I remember hanging back with Ted and Peggy White while the others went on ahead; when we caught up with them we found Carol standing in the middle of a circle of the rest, all of whom looked puzzled. Knowing Carol, I said, "Am I right in assuming that Carol has just told a joke?" They said this was so. "Which one?" Carol told me, and I asked, "Did she mention that the bishop was left-handed?" Immediately everybody got the joke, and there was much laughter. (Carol is great on punchlines, but sometimes forgets the details that lead up to them.)

Much more happened in North Ireland, including a tea with the Shaws at which Sadie Shaw had us in stitches, and riding in the back of James and Peggy's car while we all sang Gilbert & Sullivan songs (Peggy did this better than the rest of us; she was then appearing in an amateur production of one of the G&S operettas), and me taking the opportunity one afternoon to sit down at Walt's typewriter, in a room overlooking the wild Irish Sea (I suddenly understood one reason Walt hadn't managed to complete many fan-pieces lately) to write the first couple of pages of a Carl Brandon satire on Ballard's *The Drowned World* – I never finished this, which in view of Walt's gafiation seemed appropriate. But eventually we had to leave and return to the States: Carol and I and Ted took the train to Dublin – Pete had already left, having other plans – and Ian McAulay met us in Dublin and gave us a quick tour by car around the city before depositing us at Shannon Airport* at which we ignored the duty-free shops and boarded a plane for New York City. On the plane, while I was sitting

with Ted, I ordered a martini, which caused Ted to accuse me of selling out to the establishment since I'd gone to work at Ace Books; he ordered a soft drink. I spent much of the flight trying to explain to him the virtues of having money enough to partake of sophisticated drinks, but he'd have none of it. Ten years later, when Ted was editing *Heavy Metal*, he told me of his many perqs there, and I told him *he* had sold out.

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* That is, Dublin Airport for a connecting flight to Shannon Airport, which is about 140 miles from Dublin. Confirmed by Ted White's memory of this trip. *[Ed.]*

But the truth, of course, is that despite times in both our lives when we had some extra money, both Ted and I have remained simple fans unsullied by big-money blandishments, twilltone-true forever, until we get a better offer, of course.

Carol and I returned to New York and took up our regular lives almost as if nothing like TAFF had happened to us. We seldom regaled our friends with tales of Paris, London, and Ireland. The next year, 1966, brought Tom Schlück to the U.S. as TAFF representative; he stayed with me and Carol in NYC and we introduced him to Americans at the Cleveland worldcon and fanhistory went onward as it always does. All this happened nearly twenty years ago, in a time few people remember and even those of us who took part in it find nearly mythic and recall it through a pint, stoutly.

Editorial Note: Larry Carmody

The preceding piece began life as a long letter and grew from there. As Terry wrote in a P.S., "...it's the only TAFF report of my trip that I'm ever likely to write," so consider it as such. Now who's next? Elliot Shorter? Steve Stiles? Avedon Carol? Or even one of your co-editors, Stu Shiffman, who has already published a piece of his? We shall see. And, Elliot, we still have that stencil with the piece of art work to go with the instalment of your TAFF report. Since that stencil was cut in 1978, we don't know just how well it will print....

Raffles #8, August 1984

1970: Elliot K. Shorter

Elliot K. Shorter attended Heicon ’70, the 1970 Worldcon held in Heidelberg, Germany. The rival candidates were Bill Rotsler and Charlie Brown. Elliot K. Shorter died in 2013.

Platform

Elliot Shorter certainly isn’t... he stands taller. Always visible at a convention or fan gatherings due to his height and girth, with or without a guitar slung on his back. But the important thing about Elliot is that he is fun! Fun to talk with, sing with, get drunk with, turn a mimeo crank with. Elliot has been a great addition to fandom since he first started attending cons (most worldcons and east coast regionals since 1962, a number of Midwescons and Westercon 22). He has been Sergeant at Arms at Lunacons and at NYCon III, auctioneer at Lunacons, panelist at Boskones, art show judge at Westercon 22 and St. Louiscon. He has been chosen Parliamentarian for the 1971 Worldcon – Noreascon.

Elliot is an active member of many clubs. He was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the Eve. Sess. of City College of CUNY for 5 years. He is a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Tolkien Society of America, Hyborean Legion, ESFA, Lunarians, Fanoclasts and NESFA. He has also participated in the publishing of *Engram*, the *Heicon Flyer*, *Locus* and *Niekas*.

Elliot promises that, if elected, he will begin writing his TAFF REPORT on the day he is notified of the election.

Nominated by: Ginger Buchanan, Jack Gaughan, Bruce Pelz, John-Henri Holmberg and Waldemar Kumming.

Introduction – A Shorter Odyssey

Elliot Shorter

"TAFF, What's that?" I exclaimed as we sat around room 304 in City College's Finley-Center, listening to Charlie Brown discourse on the intricacies of fandom. We, the Evening Session Science Fiction Society of the City College of New York, neo-fans all back then in early 1962. "It's the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund," he answered. "Which means what?" I snarled and he explained. "Wow," I thought. "To be respected that much, that others would think you worthy of such an honour." And so Time passed. Of the City College Club members, Marsha Elkin would marry Charlie Brown, Ed Meskys, who introduced us to Charlie would create *Niekas* and become 2nd Thain of the Tolkien Society, Frank Spellman would be revealed as the Lord Dunsany collector par excellence, Jake Waldman, Al Rachlin and Sheila Kamper would become convention fans, Bruce Newrock and Barry Green would be active in the formation and operation of the Society for Creative Anachronism's East Kingdom, Stew Brownstein would swear never to be an active fan and end up 2nd in command at a world con, Fred Lerner would create the Columbia SF Club and a bibliography group, and me, I'd just muddle around going to conventions, being in the army writing the odd loc here and there, and getting involved with *Locus*. And so it came to pass in the spring of 1969 that TAFF was faltering. Apathy gripped fandom. However a few fans remembered and pushed TAFF. The *Locus* staff collected ballots at the Disclave and administrator Steve Stiles noted that of the other ballots received, the *Locus* copies headed the list. But what has this all to do with me you ask. Fandom remained apathetic. The Trimbles announced for TAFF and no one else. Worry wreathed our heads. A one "person" race would be disastrous. Who else could we get to run? What if someone nominated me? Hilarious thought! Never happen! I'd run, of course! That was in September. No one wanted to run. Finally Rotsler announced. A sigh of relief. A TAFF race. Then, horrors! Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Trimbles must withdraw. Who do we get as a replacement? Bob Pavlat's name is heard in many quarters. And the comedy begins. Administrators Stiles extends nominating deadline for a

month. Rumors say Bob Pavlat turns down an offer to run. Rumor confirmed. Deadline draws near. What now? One party race is death to TAFF. What to do? What to do? Chapter the next In Which a *Locus* Staff Member Takes a Hand.

Locus #60, 23 July 1970

How Fearless Leader Got His Name

Elliot Shorter

Hi! Long time no see. I'm Elliot Shorter and I was Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund delegate to Heicon, the World Science Fiction Convention in Heidelberg, Germany. As you may not know, one of the requirements for accepting the TAFF nomination is the pledge to write a report of your trip. In my column in *Locus*, where I used to comment on TAFF doings while I was the administrator, I started my report. If I recall correctly, I wrote how my candidacy began, and about the unusual surprise we received at the NESFA picnic in Boston. Then my personal life got in the way and I ceased writing. Last summer, after being out of work for three months, the urge to indulge in written fanac once more hit me. At the same time it was brought to my attention that people still wanted to read my TAFF report. In fact, there was this line of publishers waiting with hot mimeos, rolling offsets and the inimitable bated breath. Jerry and Suzle got to me first.

"TAFF Jottings" will appear as often as Jerry and Suzle can get me to give them material. The episodes described will not necessarily appear in sequential order. Fans who were involved with the bid and the trip are invited to comment and make additions. Fan artists are requested to read the column and its episodes. Any artwork resulting from those actions would be appreciated. Eventually a Compleat Report will be issued.

The following episode is...

How Fearless Leader Got His Name

Those of you who have been associated with Don Lundry on the Lunacon '72 committee, the Lunacon '76 committee, the "7 for '77" bid/Suncon committee and the like, have often heard him called "Fearless Leader", or, sometimes, just "Fearless".

Fearless Leader? Why?

Some of you who are old enough will recall that Fearless Leader was the villain on *Rocky the Flying Squirrel* and *Bullwinkle*; the master for whom those inept spies, Boris and Natasha, worked. So, what has a tv

cartoon villain to do with a Name Fan?

Now you're hanging. What's going on? Read on, dear fan, and see how it all happened.

Don Lundry had organized a charter flight to Europe for the Heicon. Starting with Lester and Evelyn Del Rey at St. Louiscon, he had slowly accumulated a courageous group of fans ready to venture into "the great unknown". He had surmounted the tragic death of Evie Del Rey. He had overcome the loss of several key couples at almost the last minute. Things were going smoothly. And then came the letter....

Periodically the Worldcon has trouble with the Hugos. One year, Nycon III it was, the rockets were made of plastic. Another year, instead of being smooth, they were incredibly pitted. This year the problem was: would they be made on time? For the molds were aged and dying, and might not survive to make the awards. Also, they were being fabricated in San Diego, one continent and one ocean away from the convention. Gloom and despair spread across the Atlantic to that room where Mario Bosnyak, Thea-Molly Auer and the rest of the Heicon committee waited.

... the letter:

Dear Don:

Hugos made. Being sent to New York. Will arrive just before you leave for Europe. Can you bring them (I hope)?

Mario.

Gak! What do we do now?

"El," said Don, "can you carry them?"

"Maybe one, I'm close to the 44 pound limit now."

Scramble! Scramble! Scramble! Hunt! Hunt! Hunt! Find fan with no luggage. Where, oh where, is such a fan?

Departure day! Don, Nancy Lambert and I were to meet at 5th Avenue and Rockefeller Center, across from the KLM office. Together we would take the bus to Idlewild's International Departure Building, where we would meet the rest of the flight. (Oh yes, for you younglings out there, the New York International Airport at Idlewild, called Idlewild, is known in some circles as JFK International Airport. I do not believe in instant adulation and deification. It was Idlewild. It is at Idlewild. And to me, who am proud of being a New Yorker with an advanced case of Sixth Avenue Syndrome, it will always be Idlewild. I might note that in at least one case, "Uncle" has seen the light, and the Kennedy Space Center is once again located at, and on, Cape Canaveral, Florida.) I arrived first. Then Nancy

arrived.

"What ho," or words to that effect, said I. "Is that little knapsack all your luggage, or has someone taken the rest to the airport?"

"That's all," she said.

At this point, as bells were ringing, lights were flashing and gongs were gonging in my head, Don ran up carrying the Hugos in a plastic brown wrapper.

"I figure," he said breathlessly, "I'll take two, you'll take one and Marsha (Elkin/Brown/Jones) will take three. There have to be others who can take one or more."

"Don't sweat it," I said. "Nancy only has a small knapsack. She can carry them. What do they weigh?"

They were sufficiently light so that even with her knapsack, Nancy had less than 44 pounds of material. So she agreed to carry them at least as far as England.

When the promised airport bus didn't arrive, we flagged a cab and headed for the airport. You know Tom Paxton's song "Hell of a Way to Run an Airline"? There's a line in it that goes, "Well, a taxi to the airport cost me seven or eight [dollars]." We know where he caught that cab.

At the airport we gathered the rest of the flight and went to check in. No problem. Then on to the loading gate for final check-in and transportation to the plane.

Through that door there. Go to your right and down those stairs.

"Hey! Where's Nancy? Where's Don? Hold it, gang! Our leader is missing. Without him we don't go."

Some minutes go by. We begin to get nervous. Where are they? Suddenly here come Don and Nancy, Don looking somewhat grim.

It seems that in doing the seat assignments, KLM had placed four people in two seats. This little error was noticed at the boarding desk when Nancy Lambert (remember her? she's got the Hugos) showed her gate pass.

"I'm sorry, but you don't have a seat. You'll have to wait."

"Huh!" Don said and went to work. He haggled. He threatened. He cajoled.

"No room," they said stubbornly. "She doesn't have a seat."

"ALL RIGHT!" said Don. "I've got reservations for an 80 person group. Confirmed reservations. If one of my people can't go, I'll pull everyone off the plane. EVERYONE!"

"Ha, ha. You wouldn't pull seventy-nine people off the plane," said the airline.

“Watch me,” replied Don.

“Good grief. You *would* take all seventy-nine off, wouldn’t you?” said the airline with dawning horror.

“*And* ground the flight until all their luggage was off-loaded.”

At that point the airline personnel got down on their hands and knees, and began to lay out all the boarding passes in a desperate attempt to find a solution. It soon became obvious that what they had done was to place the passengers from one row into another row that was already occupied. It was clear that the newly discovered empty row of seats was directly behind the doubly-occupied one. So, removing Nancy from Suzle’s lap (yes, the editor of *SpanInq* was intimately involved with this problem), and placing her in a seat of her own, the airline people rose to their feet and apologized profusely.

“Thank you for your trouble,” said Don courteously, and he and Nancy and the Hugos headed for the stairway and the bus....

“Well,” says I, “you are not only our leader, but our Fearless Leader, for you have braved the airline in its den and made it yield to you. So that this feat of bravery and leadership shall be ne’er forgotten, you shall be called ‘Fearless Leader’ evermore.” And so he has been called.

And if you really think I said it that way (you can hear the angels’ chorus and the strings, can’t you?), even though I was and am in the Society for Creative Anachronism, boy, are you weird.

Next time: Don and I attempt to catch the train from Frankfort to Amsterdam, or, “The Shortest Way Passes Every Fountain in Germany”.

The Spanish Inquisition #7/8, June 1976

Heicon Report

Elliot Shorter

620 ATTEND FIRST WORLDCON IN NON ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY OPPOSITION PROVES FIZZLE EUROPEAN FANDOM PLANS MAJOR CONVENTION ON A ROTATION PLAN HEICON WINS TRIESTE FILM FESTIVAL'S GOLDEN SPACESHIP AWARD

620 attendees from 15 countries out of 973 registrees from 25 countries attended this historic event, the first Worldcon ever held in a non Anglo-American country. If you didn't think it was such an event then you weren't listening. Press coverage by the major European newspapers and broadcasting networks, in some cases minor, but they were there, and by Armed Forces Radio Network. The fans from Spain, Italy, Roumania, Germany, Sweden, and England would tell you, and when the committee received the Golden Space Ship, at the banquet, the presentation speech would take note of the historic occasion. And indeed it was. Out of it would come plans for a major European convention whose site would rotate about the continent. The first will be held in conjunction with the Trieste Film Festival of 1972, the second 2 years later in Belgium. The third to be combined with Stockholm in '76.

Registration started Thursday at 2 p.m. We, Bruce, Marsha, myself, Ethel Lindsay, Bill Burns, and Sue Sanderson arrived at 6 p.m and went to our respective hotels and went to converge on the Stadthalle. However, registration had closed at 6 and we all got sidetracked to either or two of the three major parties held that night. One was an impromptu getting together of fans who found the Stadthalle closed after 6, one was an impromptu gathering of fans at the Europaische Hof Bar and Lounge and one was the Liverpool group's continuous party – well almost continuous. Friday morning registration started at 8, opening session at 11. It began late: it was really a Worldcon. After the GoHs (fan and pro) and the toastmaster were introduced according to distance travelled and received their gifts with wives if any receiving a bouquet of flowers the Left Wing Opposition was allowed to speak. Their leader, Albrecht Stuby, gave the speech in German. No translation in any other language ever appeared although it was promised. Spontaneous translation stated it was an attack on frivolity like the Hugo Awards, Costume Balls, Bavarian Nights and St.

Fantony, an attack on the United States for all sorts of things and a call for making the convention politically active. When Ion Hobana of Roumania was asked to comment on this he noted that if the convention were to be politicized he for one would have to leave and he would not be able to attend another. The convention's general technique of handling these, as I call them, children, was to ignore them and not confront them. This drove them up the wall cause they could get nowhere – no matter what they did.

Axel Melhardt introduced Follow (The Fellowship Of the Lords of the Lands Of Wonder), the German Sword and Sorcery group. The Organization is somewhat along the lines of our Association of Great Houses of our SCA, but all Follow members are fans. Follow publishes the *Lands of Wonder* and *Pioneer* – two professional looking fanzines. Their resident bards write excellent heroic poetry in English. There was a panel on international fandom consisting of Dave Kyle, Ethel Lindsay, John Brunner, Jim Blish and Frank Dietz. Then the Bob Silverberg speech. Adrienne Martine had surprised me by showing up (unfortunately no one took a picture of my surprise and shock when she appeared) with a costume she got me to promise I would wear in the competition if she could get it to Europe. So I missed all festivities till the ball. We went as Titania and Oberon and won best group. Prizes 6 bottles of wine to first-place in each of the categories, male, female and group, and 2 bottles of wine to second place were awarded at Bavarian Night. Dave Kyle was MC.

The Swedish group attempted to hold a small party that night. However the word got around and since everyone knew where the Europaishe Hof was, the party became a jam packed typical large party. Amazingly, since room parties are not the thing on the continent, the management did not object, nor would they on succeeding nights.

Saturday morning at 9:30, the discussion on future world cons pro&con was held, Bruce Pelz providing(??). The general consensus was, that the plan voted on in St. Louis was too much, and fans favored a return to the original 3 year US rotation plan with non US sites bidding at will. Further the Hugos must become an international award traveling with the Worldcon. I suggested that each ethnic or language group vote its own awards yearly – all to be awarded at the Worldcon. Everyone, there were about 250 attendees, was warned to be at the business meeting the next morning to implement the decision made.

Jurgen von Scheidt gave a talk on SF – The Psychedelic Literature. Overhearing a conversation between Alan Nourse and Bob Silverberg later, I gather it was unfortunately dull for it was an important topic, and

did not really cover writing while under the influence of the psychedelic drugs. After Forry Ackerman spoke on the birth of the German SF Club and horror films made in Hollywood, Dr. Herman Franke gave his GoH speech. He spoke in German and it was a long speech. As a result there was a great deal of restlessness among the attendees – some leaving so as not to be rude, others who could not understand German gathering and talking through the speech. After it was over James Blish, Alan Nourse and Poul Anderson got together and apologized for the actions of the Americans in the audience. This antagonized some of the American fans who felt that since there were others making noise why should they be singled out, and antagonized some of the foreign fans who felt they were making a big thing of nothing. Since Jim had been spokesman he took the brunt of the anger. However, Dr. Franke, it turned out, had realized the problem, and was not annoyed. He was the only GoH to write his speech and the committee released an English translation in *Fanorama*, the con newspaper.

After dinner – Bavarian Night. Here the Opposition made their move. During the St. Fantony Ceremony, held while the Bavarian performers took a break, flyers, in German only, attacking the US presence in Vietnam came flying over the railing of the balcony. Then more flyers came over the railing thrown by three of our kids – they had been handed the flyers to have fun with. A delegation of fans maximum 8 went to the balcony to quiet the fuss. Karen Anderson and the Stadthalle guard chewed out the kids while Stu Brownstein took pictures with a smile. Bruce Pelz, Al Rachlin, Scratch Bachrach and a few other fans leaned against the railing and talked. I walked down to the balcony with my back to the AST (Opposition) and watched the ceremony. Albrecht Stuby and his henchmen glared daggers, muttered oaths, assigned each of us a shadow, otherwise did nothing and then went out and lied to the newspapers for the report on Monday stated that 30 burley-bullies of guards went up on the balcony that night. Inducted into the Order of St. Fantony were Axel Melhardt (Austria), Thea Molly Auler (Germany), Bill Burns (England), Mario Bosnyak (International), Manfred Kage (Germany), and Don Wollheim (USA). Fred Prophet failed the acid test and was very convincingly beheaded off stage. Parties that night – Europaishe Hof Ara Pashinian and at the Taunhauser St. Fantony threw one for first fandom. At the latter it was suddenly discovered how inefficient, fouled up AMEXCO Heidelberg was. With money paid in advance and holding receipts some of the English fans found themselves not booked for rooms. However they made friends with the room clerk and he fixed things up. Turns out that this was

only the latest of a series of foulups AMEXCO had perpetrated. I recommend the Post Chase Park Plaza action in addition to whatever other action they planned.

THE BUSINESS MEETING: Will the AST finally Act? The AST is the Left wing segment of European fandom who have threatened to disrupt the convention. To date they have been unsuccessful. Amy Brownstein feels that after the fiasco at Bavarian Night they'll be too ashamed to face the world and besides they'll oversleep the meeting. To forestall any actions of the AST 150 fans have gotten up at an unearthly hour to attend a business meeting scheduled for 9 a.m. Promptly at 9:30 Phil Rogers called the meeting to order, read a sheet of paper to himself and, stating "by the precedent set by St. Louiscon Business Meeting...", tore it to shreds. It read "Resolved that Heicon '70 concerned about the world of the future, conclude that the institution of war as an instrument of national policy is incompatible with the development of a humanistic society and may lead to the destruction of all societies. (Signed) Max M. Stalnaker #551, Miriam Chown #541, Nicholas Reve." The first order of business was con site selection. Bruce Pelz, co-chairman of the LA in '72 committee, noted that due to the lack of opposition fandom was stuck with them. A motion by "Filthy Pierre" about the rotation zones was read and tabled till Noreascon. We immediately labeled it the 54°40' or Fight motion for it delineates the zones in that manner and it requires a map to follow it. A European group led by Jacqueline H. Osterrath made a motion calling for the establishment of a European convention. "Move that: a) Feeling the necessity of a tightening of the relations between persons interested in science fiction and all other related meetings, activities, and phenomenons, we recommend and wish the organization of yearly SF meetings by language or country. b) In the same way, the creation of an European meeting (convention) following some rotation plans. c) In order to promote SF (like the Hugos), the organization of an SF award to be given for every country (or language) in the following categories: novel, short story, fanzine, motion picture, comic strip, screenplay, painting, illustration, etc..., provided the quality attained in those fields is high enough to justify the awards, to be given at national conventions. d) Later, the creation, on the European scale, of an European SF Award following the same principles, to be given at the European convention." It was signed by Jacqueline Osterrath, Pierre Strinati of Switzerland, Andre Leborgne and Tania Vandenberghe of Belgium, Jean-Paul Cronimus and Claude Carme of France, Gianfranco de Turris and Gianluigi Missaija of Italy, Luis Vigil and Sebastian Martinez of Spain, Ion Hobana and Vladimir

Colin of Roumania, Dr. Herbert W. Franke and Manfred Kage of Germany, and someone from Sweden (Per Insulander was announced in this spot and announced that it was not he who signed). Phil ruled it out of order because the Worldcon had no right to determine local conventions. He then entertained a motion of support for the group. Said motion was made, I believe, by Bruce Pelz, and passed. The group had met following the previous day's discussion on "Worldcons Pro and Con". One hopes that this was not convention fever and that the Eurocon is realized. Now came the meat of the meeting. However yesterday's meeting on Worldcons had gotten most of the arguments out of the air and after a minimum of discussing all competing and/or variant motions were withdrawn leaving only the motion promulgated by Bruce Pelz (USA), Ulf Westblum (Sweden), Per Insulander (Sweden), Marsha Brown (USA), L.O. Strandberg (Sweden), Anthony Lewis (USA), and Elliot Kay Shorter (USA) which read: "Moved that World SF Con rotation plan return to a 3 zone system i.e. the Western, Midwest, and Eastern zones of North America beginning in 1973 with the Midwest. Boundaries of these zones shall be as previously defined. Any site outside of North America may bid for a World SF Con in any year. All bids must be placed two years in advance." This passed and will be brought up again at Noreascon for ratification. We then ratified decisions from St. Louiscon: The inclusion of Bermuda, the Bahamas and the Caribbean in the Eastern zone, and "no award" to be mandatory on all Hugo ballots. There being no more business the meeting was declared adjourned. Forty-five minutes had passed from start to finish. Later we found out that Amy's theory was correct and the AST members had indeed slept through the meeting.

I missed most of the early afternoon since the huckster room closed that day. Also the Delta Film Group of Liverpool was showing its amateur films – one a take-off on *Frankenstein* – hilarious, the other a take-off on Harry Harrison's *Deathworld*. Harry gets killed off in reel one. Two slide shows of convention pictures were given, 1 by Rick Pohlman, the other by John Mansfield. The Art Show Auction was at 3. As usual some people were dissatisfied with the publicity. Considering it was announced at least 3 times from the stage, a sign was posted on Saturday in the Art Show room and an announcement, in English, was made in *Fanorama*, I feel that this year it was not the committee's fault. The Art Show was not competitive this year. Art in Europe is *Art*, not illustration. There was a lot of work I didn't like but recognized as good. E.C. "Ted" Tubb's speech was the most exciting at the con. Unfortunately the batteries of my tape recorder died during it. After, he and Phil Rogers ran the 1st auction and

took in about 500DM. Off to the banquet. Sigh. While I had good food, reports of rubber veal and bouncing peas continue to pour in. The only thing that everyone agreed was good was the potato croquettes. The appetizer was chunks of hard cooked chicken in sauce. We're not used to hard chicken any more. And the less said about dessert the better. The banquet was held in the castle that overlooks the town and if you want to hear about my adventures getting there read the TAFF report somewhere about Nov. 1. Since the speeches were given throughout the con, the banquet could concern itself with just awards and so it proved fast. John Brunner was in fine fettle as Toastmaster. Dave Kyle and Forry Ackerman were brief with the 1st Fandom and Big Heart awards respectively. When the Golden Space Ship was presented to Manfred for the committee he in turn presented it to the most deserving member – Mario who received a standing ovation. Afterwards there was a party in the Europaishe Hof Lounge. The Canadians threw a party in their room and 1st Fandom threw a reciprocal party for St. Fantony. I was invited to the latter but considering I didn't get out of the Europaishe Hof bar till closing; talking to fans like Arutin Pashinian of Spain, or Mario and Molly or Ted Tubb takes time; I didn't get there. Monday a boat-ride up the river through the locks, "if you've seen one lock you've seen them all," to Neckarsteinach. Neckarsteinach is known for its castles. Don Lundry and I got to two. Jack Chalker to three. After the trip Bob Silverberg said half seriously Lunacon should plan a Circle Line trip round Manhattan as part of the convention program! It was a great program item. The Mystery Item scheduled was a wrap up item: "What did you like or dislike about the con?" The GoHs killed this part of the program by stating the committee had nothing to apologize for or be ashamed of since it was a great convention. The committee received a standing ovation. This item was followed by an unbelievable auction where Bruce Pelz, Tony Lewis and Jack Chalker auctioned off everything not tied down including the shirt off Mario's back. Aided by Don Lundry – money collection and Astrid Anderson – Recorder. They took in approximately $900 American or 3242.97 DM. With the $180 Ted Tubb brought in that was an income of $1080 before percentages. Among items auctioned was a broken tandem bike. It went for 25 marks to Axel Melhardt. Arthur Cruttenden, an English fan, found himself stranded when it broke down and the driver of the team went home in disgust. Arthur had enough to reach the Channel but not cross it. When the tandem failed to bring anything when first auctioned the hat was passed and 200 DM was raised. Much in excess of necessary so an English emergency fund will be started administered by Doreen Parker and the

Knights of St. Fantony. With the final ending party in the Europaishe Hof bar, the quiet closing parties thrown by the Nivens and the Blishes, Heicon ’70 came to an end. It was a good con. Its flaws were mostly from lack of experience compounded basically by having a committee of four people who did most of the work. To Manfred, Hans-Werner, Thea Molly and Mario, salute for a job well done. *(Elliot Shorter)*

Locus #63, 15 September 1970

Notes

The *Locus* transcriber flagged a couple of obvious typos: the mimeographed text has “There (sic) leader, Albrecht Stuby” and “St. Louis was two (sic) much” – both fixed in the above as a routine editorial courtesy. Also in *Locus*, “Their resident bard write excellent heroic poetry” needs a one-word change to either “bards” (as opted for above) or “writes” – but which? Repeated words were deleted in “an SF award to be given to be given for”, and a very few minor fixes to punctuation have been made. The published version, after the *620 ATTEND FIRST WORLDCON...* headlines, was unparagraphed except for occasional “//” dividers between sentences. For the sake of readability these have here become paragraph breaks. *[Ed.]*

1974: Peter Weston

Peter Weston attended Discon II, the 1974 Worldcon held in Washington DC. The rival candidate was Peter Roberts. Peter Weston died in 2017.

Platform

Grin, glasses, and (latterly) moustache, Peter Weston has been a feature of international fandom since 1963 when his fanzine *Speculation*, originally *Zenith*, started. In that time both *Speculation* and its editor have come far, amassing five Hugo nominations and winning the Europa Award at Eurocon One in Trieste. Pete himself, ever a deceptively serious but fundamentally fannish and sociable prime mover, has travelled many points of the fannish compass.

Some examples:

Founded the Birmingham SF Group (1971); helped start Novacon, now held every November; organized the Speculation conferences of 1970-2; gives public lectures on sf; introduced many valuable people to fandom (and rescued others from gafia); and organized the memorable Worcester Eastercon of 1971.

So why did his two previous TAFF attempts misfire? That's a big mystery, but he's still one of the best candidates yet. Why not vote for him now... and TAFF and fandom in the future.

Nominators: Charlie Brown, Ethel Lindsay, Andy Porter, Andrew Stephenson and Ian Williams.

Stranger in a Very Strange Land

Peter Weston

A report on the 32nd World Science Fiction Convention, held in Washington DC, 29 August – 2 September 1974

Imagine 3,000 science fiction fans packed into one huge hall; a hotel reputed to possess nearly four miles of internal corridors; and total receipts of well over a quarter of a million dollars! Yes, *everything* is big at an American World Science Fiction Convention!

My own position was rather special, as I was in the United States for two weeks as the representative of British fandom, having been elected 1974 TAFF winner. (The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund is fandom's oldest charity through which lucky delegates are able to shuttle between Europe and America at approximately eighteen-month intervals)

The TAFF trip really is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, of which the WorldCon forms the highpoint. It is a unique opportunity to visit the people and see the country, and finally to meet friends with whom one may have been corresponding for ten years or more. "So that's what he looks like!" is probably the reaction on.both sides.

For me the trip came as the climax to a particularly hectic and disorientating period in my life. A month or so before, I had suddenly been made redundant; my wife was expecting a baby (which finally arrived four days after my departure); and – final straw – my flight had been booked with Court Lines who went into bankruptcy the week before I left!

But enough of all that. You want to know about the Convention itself, not my problems. Suffice it to say that I flew in to New York, eventually, and met Brooklyn fandom; bounced up to Boston to see the NESFA crowd (New England SF Association) and after an exhausting ten-hour overnight train journey found myself tired and hungry in Washington DC, early on the morning of Wednesday 28 August.

Hot. And humid. Washington was built on a swamp and still has the sort of climate you'd expect. Literally White Man's Hell at that time of year. To step outdoors at midday was to feel plunged into a Turkish Bath atmosphere in which even my lightest-weight clothes felt instantly damp through.

Even though all buildings are air-conditioned (as are most cars) the

usual sort of dress is more-or-less beachwear, particularly among the girls. Halter-tops, bare midriffs, gave an unexpected fillip to my transatlantic experience!

After a much needed bath, sleep and meal, Wednesday started slowly for me. Fans were steadily arriving in the hotel lobby but for the first time in more than ten years of conventioneering I felt once more an absolute neo, knowing nobody, recognizing none of the faces in this strange fandom who looked through me with such complete indifference.

Suddenly I sympathized with the newcomer to a British convention (and there have been many, lately, spurred by the reporting of *SFM* [*SF Monthly*]), and I can only advise patience and persistence in getting to know the ropes. It takes a certain amount of courage for a novice to break through, but it's well worth while in the end.

But, of course, I wasn't really a newcomer at all. I already knew most of active US fandom through correspondence or the fanzines, plus others encountered on visits to England and even more recent acquaintances of the last few days in New York and Boston. Within an hour or so I'd secured my home base – two or three individuals to talk to, go and have a meal with, and so on, and was meeting more and more people as my horizons expanded and fans continued to roll in.

I had a short-list of those I wanted to meet, but even by Wednesday evening several hundred had arrived and were busily losing themselves in the labyrinthine complexities of the hotel. To illustrate, I might add that from one direction my room was in the basement, while simultaneously being on the ninth floor at the other end of the building (the place being built on a slope). That was only one wing of a dozen, with over 1,200 rooms booked by the convention.

During that evening I experienced an odd switch of perceptions; looking around a room and seeing so many familiar faces I felt suddenly at home, as if I'd known American fandom for years, not hours – and then I settled down to a week-long binge of late nights, conversation, and enjoyment.

I was struck by the differences as well as the similarities between the WorldCon and more familiar British conventions. Sheer size, above all. Where the largest UK Eastercon just topped 500 registrations, with 400 attending, Discon II reached an awesome 4,900, of which some 4,000 were said to have appeared. Anyone who thinks that a good thing has to experience the football-match crowding, and the frustrations of trying to find friends in a mob.

And, importantly, while total audiences have mushroomed in the last

five to ten years, the size of the hard core, the really keen, active types who publish fanzines, organize conventions and comprise fandom-as-I-know-it, is still counted in hundreds. So, ridiculously, the original founding body has become an outnumbered, statistically negligible slice among much larger proportions of casual readers and enthusiasts, *Star Trek* and fantasy fans, and so on, who've probably been to two or three conventions and never even heard of Tucker or Willis.

Who? (But that's another story!)

Another difference, also probably due to size, is that to me professional sf authors seemed conspicuous by their absence, compared to the way in which Brian Aldiss, Jim Blish, or Ken Bulmer are integral parts of the British Eastercon scene. At Discon the authors appeared briefly, took part in programme events, and then vanished mysteriously to some presumed Valhalla in the attic, beyond reach of their anxious admirers.

Not altogether true, of course; Larry Niven and Isaac Asimov were to be seen signing autographs at a frantic pace, and I personally encountered Harlan Ellison and Poul Anderson at different room parties. But in sheer self-defence I suspect the "pros" have to hide from their followers at least part of the time in order to get any peace at all.

Ellison and Asimov both are as entertaining in person as they are in print, exuding tremendous wit and personality, to the delight of all. Fittingly the Convention opened with a "dialogue" between the two which immediately turned into a mock slanging match.

"You Dirty Old Man, Asimov," called Ellison from a dais in the centre of the main hall. "Stand up, Harlan!" retorted Asimov from the top table, referring to Ellison's modest height.

There was simply too much to see and do. Simultaneous programme events in different halls; a huge book room and art show, an entirely separate, continuous film programme, and half-a-dozen "syndicate" discussion rooms which I didn't even find until the last day. These were occupied by groups like the N3F (National Fantasy Fan Federation), SFRA (Science Fiction Research Association), and so on. There was a Georgette Heyer Tea (in Regency costume, please), and a Burroughs Dum-Dum (in leopard skins, maybe?).

The book room deserves special mention. Tucked in the basement, it was one of the most enormous rooms I've ever seen in a hotel, and yet crowded with the tables of over a hundred dealers selling old magazines, comics, film-strips, artwork, models – you name it, someone had it. One of my regrets is not spending more time investigating this more thoroughly, but even so I managed to pick up some old *Astounding*s (my own

obsession) at a moderate price by current UK standards.

One thing which really surprised me was that American fans don't drink – or rather, the hotel bar plays a far less important role than does this establishment at our Eastercons. In recent years we've literally drunk our hotels dry – was it 3,000 gallons at Tynecon? – and to us the bar is the focal point, the axis around which a convention revolves, a friendly inexpensive place in which to meet everyone, sooner or later.

It had no counterpart at Discon II and I thought this resulted in an odd vacuum at the heart of the convention. I soon discovered the reason for the lack of interest in the bar, however – on my first day I bought a modest round of three small tins of fizzy, chilled beer (no draught) for no less than $4.65 – nearly £2.00! The bartender was a burly Mafia-type who polished his glasses and supervised an enormous array of strange-looking bottles, serving things like "screwdrivers" and "manhattans" to the few affluent enough to afford them.

Talking about this later I was told that the whole thing probably stems from Prohibition; there still seems to be an equivocal attitude towards drinking in the United States – and they have no "pub" tradition as we have over here. My way to tackle the problem was to buy a few dozen tins of beer from a local supermarket and stock up in my room, but even then I found that American fans drank comparatively little at room parties, seeming to prefer Coca-Cola!

Saturday night saw the Masquerade, what we call the Fancy Dress Party, except that at the WorldCon participants usually enact some little tableau or scene, rather than just walking on and walking off. There were over one hundred costumes, some of them very beautiful, including excellent renderings from Philip José Farmer novels, *Flesh* (the be-antlered Stag and virginal attendant) and *Maker of Universes* (the Harpy), and I noticed that as a result of the John Norman "Gor" books, slave girls in chains were particularly abundant this year!

Next morning the business session was held, at which it was decided to give Kansas City the job of organizing the 1976 WorldCon (Australia already having 1975), while the next convenient time for Europeans to get across will be in 1977 when the East Coast has the honour once again. Most likely contenders at the moment seem to be Montreal or Orlando, Florida, the latter conveniently near Cape Kennedy and Walt Disney World.

While the votes were being counted I seized the chance to make a brief announcement of Britain's intention to host the 1979 WorldCon, which seemed to be well received although almost certainly we shall have

competition from Chicago. I took across 1,000 badges proclaiming "Britain's Fine in '79" to distribute at Discon, and by the end of the convention had pushed the numbers of pre-supporting memberships to over 400. (If you'd care to join, simply send 50p to Malcolm Edwards, 19 Ranmoor Gardens, Harrow, Middlesex.)

Finally, the Sunday evening banquet. This really became something of an endurance test because the thing went on for so long – nearly five hours under bright lights in a crowded room seating about 1,100, growing hotter and hotter. Roger Zelazny spoke as Guest of Honour and received a standing ovation – he is tremendously popular and deservedly so. And then the Hugo Awards were presented, handsome silvery rockets given to various winners, to Ben Bova, Harlan Ellison, and finally, for Best Novel, to *Rendezvous with Rama* (accepted by the publisher, Betty Ballantine, on behalf of Arthur C Clarke).

All too soon the next day, the WorldCon came to an end, its main arteries severed and its life-blood flowing down the steps of the hotel as fans departed back to their ordinary lives. I had met hundreds of people to be counted as friends, and hope to go back, some day, to re-live the experience of my first American World Convention.

Science Fiction Monthly vol 2 no 6, June 1975

1976: Roy Tackett

Roy Tackett attended Mancon 5, the 1976 UK Eastercon held in Manchester. He tied with the rival candidate Bill Bowers but the latter could not make the trip: despite the tie, funds were not enough for two delegates. Roy Tackett died in 2005.

Platform

Roy Tackett's friendly charm, wit, outgoing good nature and no-nonsense attitude about a myriad of things have made *Dynatron* and Roy popular and well-known since 1960. Member of First Fandom, FAPA, CAPA, NFFF, he has been an office-holder in most of them; a Director in the I.S.L., Fan Guest of Honour at *Westercon XXII* and a guiding force behind the formation of the Albuquerque S.F.S, and the *Bubonicon*. Active in Japanese fandom, Roy received their first Japanese SF Federation Award (1965).

Fans have found him a congenial, interesting and colourful conversationalist at convention-time. Let's share him with England, for truly, Roy Tackett is the TAFFan for all reasons.

Nominated by: Ed Cox, Mike Glyer, Peter Roberts, Bob Vardeman, Harry Warner, Jr., and Ulf Westblom.

Tackett's Travels in Taffland

Roy Tackett

Early in 1975, it was, that a note arrived from Rick Sneary inquiring if I was agreeable to standing for TAFF. Some of the West Coast fans, it appeared, had the idea that I might make a good TAFF candidate and a few anglofen agreed so.... I checked out the dates, did some calculations on finances and how much leave time I would have and wrote back to Rick that I would be honoured.

Bill Bowers was the only other candidate and we both conducted the sort of campaign common at the time: we did nothing. On New Year's day 1976 Len Moffatt rang me up to tell me that the campaign had ended in a tie. There were sufficient funds to send us both, however, which seemed the fannish thing to do. Bill wrote that he was having a variety of personal problems and had decided to decline the trip.

There was precedent for that, of course. Vincent Clarke was the first elected TAFF delegate in 1954 but could not make the trip. Lee Hoffman was the first American delegate elected in 1956 and she also declined the trip.

Following the call from Len there was the scramble to get things in order; reservations must be made (it cost more to fly from Albuquerque to New York than from New York to Britain), arrangements for an extended leave from work, and all the other not so trivial details that suddenly show up.

The Kyles were living in England at the time and Dave wrote that he would meet us at Heathrow and put us up for a couple of days while we settled the details of our trip. Well and good. Nice people, the Kyles.

April 9 came all too soon but noon found Chrystal and me strapped into our TWA aircraft and waiting for takeoff. And waiting. And waiting. The stewardesses did their bit with the food and drinks. (It is a rule of all airlines, if there are problems, give the passengers food and drinks – lots of drinks.) There was, it seems, engine troubles and we would be delayed some four hours. Enough so that we would miss all connections and not arrive in Heathrow until the day following the day we were supposed to arrive. Marvellous! TWA, however, did get a message to Dave Kyle appraising him of the situation and our new ETA.

After some amusing and interesting incidents at O'Hare and JFK airports and an utterly boring flight across the Atlantic (there is hardly anything more boring than a trans-oceanic flight) we deplaned at Heathrow and were greeted by a long line of exotically dressed people all carrying placards printed in equally exotic languages. I translated one of these as "First Fandom" and, sure enough, underneath it was Dave Kyle.

Dave waited while we made our way through immigration, customs and currency exchange where what I hope was an untypical ugly American tossed a roll of hundreds on the counter and asked for "whatever you think I'll need to keep me for two weeks." I assume the bank people were honest with him. I'd have given him a farthing. Once through with all the official foolishness we joined Dave for the drive to "Two Rivers" his delightful house on the Thames in Surrey. While we cleaned up and got comfortable Dave called Peter Weston, the British TAFF Administrator, to let him know that the Tacketts had made it across and give him some idea of what our plans were.

Pete and the British fans had drawn up an itinerary for us but Chrystal and I had our own list of places to go and things to see so we told Pete we were doing fine and would meet him in Manchester for the convention.

Terry Jeeves, one of the finest gentlemen and fans there is, rang up to tell us that we would, by God, spend a few days with him at Sheffield or he would read us out of First Fandom. We agreed that we would.

Dave and Ruth delivered us to the British Railways station at Weybridge where a most co-operative young agent looked at our Britrail passes and plotted us out a schedule which could get us from Weybridge to Sheffield, something less than 200 miles, in a mere three days by way of Salisbury, Bath and assorted other points.

Salisbury for Stonehenge, of course. Stonehenge had #1 priority on the trip. It actually predates the pyramids of Egypt and the current consensus is that it was an astronomical observatory. Chrystal and I spent several hours wandering around, taking sightings and the like. An awe-inspiring and illuminating site.

We arrived at Bath about midafternoon and checked into the Royal York. Chrys inquired about the city buses at the hotel desk indicating that we wanted to look around the city. The desk clerk had a better idea, called a friend who had a taxi, and for a pound gave us a private tour of the main points of the city. Upon returning to the Royal York I purchased a bottle of wine and inquired about purchasing a corkscrew. The salesclerk didn't have one for sale but opened the bottle for us. That, I told him, was something strictly forbidden in the States. He allowed that the English

were more civilized.

We spent the next day prowling the Roman ruins at Bath which have been well excavated and somewhat restored.

The next day we were off for Sheffield and first contact with British fandom in the person of Terry Jeeves. Picture a most distinguished looking British gentleman standing in the train station flashing a copy of Analog. Jeeves was a delight. As is his wife. We spent the evening at the Cine Club where Terry showed us some of his cartoons.

On the following day we all toured the countryside around Sheffield doing the tourist bit and visiting local attractions.

The next day was the 16th of April and it was convention time. The Jeeves' and the Tackett's piled into Terry's car and it was off to Manchester and Mancon 5. Arriving, of course 30 minutes too late for the scheduled TAFF panel. But as none of the TAFF-emeriti were there either the panel was rescheduled.

Let me get some words in here about TAFF and differences in attitudes. Generally speaking the TAFF delegate from the European side is mostly ignored at American conventions. He may be introduced at the opening of the con and, if lucky may get a small mention in the program book but that is about the size of it. British cons, at least in days of yore, treated TAFF as what it was originally designed to be: an honour bestowed upon the delegate by fandom. In Britain, at least, the TAFF delegate was treated as a Guest of Honour at the convention. Mancon 5 was held at the university and the attendees housed in tiny student dormitory rooms. The pro guest of honour, the fan guest of honour, and the TAFF delegate were housed in suites in the faculty halls. Differences in attitude as to what TAFF represents. The British have the right idea.

Inasmuch as we had missed the opening of the convention there was nothing to be done but head for the bar where we joined Eric Bentcliffe, Eddie Jones and Waldemar Kumming for beer and conversation. After a bit someone consulted the program and found that Ramsey Campbell was speaking of films and maybe we should go listen to him if we could find nothing better to do. Chrys and I found Ethel Lindsay chatting with the Wollheims and decided that was something better to do. Dinner seemed called for so we headed for the Gul Shan Indian Restaurant which we found to be already overflowing with fans. We found room at a table along with Karel Thole, Tom Perry, Peter Roberts, Richer Harter, Jan Finder, Eddie Jones, Marsha Jones and two or three others. The menu was starred according to the hotness of the dish with 4**** almost coming up to New Mexico's infamous green chile. Amid attacks by squadrons of paper

airplanes Peter held forth on British plans for the 1979 convention to which they hoped to attract some 2,000 stf people. The dinner was interesting and all agreed it was better than Brian Burgess's meat pie.

Back at the con I ran into a couple of unhappy-looking Swedish fans. "Roy, do you by chance have a cork-puller? You see we have all this wine at the Swedish party and no way to get it open."

It happens that I had mentioned the incident at Bath to Jeeves and, good fellow that he is, he presented me with a most unusual cork-puller and I still often carry it with me because you never know when you'll run into a bottle of wine. I reached into my pocket and removed the Jeevesian cork-puller. "Lead on to the wine," I said. Indeed they had a lot of wine. We drank a lot of wine. The Swedes put on a fine party.

Breakfast the next morning, late of course, with Jeeves and Ron Bennett. We were joined by Walt Willis who turned out to be rather quiet and shy but, as expected, sharp-witted and given to puns.

The main program item for the day was Bob Shaw's hilarious speech on Backyard Spaceships. This has been reprinted a couple of times so I won't go into details other than to say Shaw's presentation had the assembled fans weak with laughter. Later on I decided not to join the queue to argue with Gray Boak and we adjourned for dinner and parties.

The morning of the 18th was devoted to the business meeting with Leicester winning the 1977 Eastercon unopposed.* The afternoon had the art auction which went quite slowly with more items unsold than sold. I picked up three by Jeeves and one by Eddie Jones to add to the small collection of stf art at home.

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* The 1977 Eastercon venue was later changed to Coventry. *[Ed.]*

The rescheduled TAFF panel was finally held before a rather small audience. On the panel were Ron Bennett, Walt Willis, Eric Bentcliffe, Pete Weston, Eddie Jones, and Roy Tackett and for a short time we outnumbered the audience. However, other fans (presumably with nothing else to do) drifted in and we ended up with about 20 or so listening to the history of TAFF.

The awards banquet in the evening was most impressive both in service and menu. Undoubtedly the best convention banquet I have ever attended. One of the more amusing features was the continuous flow of quote cards around the hall. I don't know who started them but a new one appeared every few minutes. After everyone had eaten their fill and then some it was awards time. The Delta Film Award went to the multi-talented

Terry Jeeves. The BSFA Awards for best British SF had a Special Award for James Blish and the regular award went to Bob Shaw for *Orbitsville*. Paul Dillon won the K.F. Slater Art Award* and Ina Shorrock was presented with the Doc Weir Award. The results of the poll on the three best SF books of all time were announced: *Last and First Men* by Olaf Stapledon, *The Rose* by Charles Harness, and *The Dispossessed* by Ursula Le Guin.

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* Probably the Ken McIntyre artwork award. – *Ed.*

Peter Mabey won the TAFF drawing. (Peter Weston sold chances on a book with all proceeds going to TAFF.)

The 19th marked the close of Eastercon. It had been most enjoyable and the British fans turned out to be a fine group on the whole. Chrystal and I left Manchester shortly after noon on the train to Ulverston, spent the next couple of days exploring the pubs of the Lake District with Bob and Sadie Shaw.

From Ulverston a local train took us along the stoney Cumbrian coast around to Carlisle where we boarded “The Clansman” headed north for Inverness. The Scottish Highlands were cold in late April with heather splashed purple-brown across the hills and snow clinging to the higher peaks. Round peaks and narrow valleys were reminders of Scotland’s glacial past. Arriving at Inverness we checked into a delightful small hotel and explored the town in the long, long twilight. Chrystal found a ball game.

The next day we caught the service bus to Whitebridge which would take us out along Loch Ness. The service bus delivers the mail, the newspapers, the milk and whatever else. Whatever else this time was five passengers (two American teenaged girls over from one of the posts in Germany, a young Australian chap, Chrystal and myself) all with the same idea: to see Loch Ness. The driver was an amusing fellow well-versed in Scottish history and legend. At a point where a footpath joined the road, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, he stopped, let us out, told us to follow the path a mile or so to the loch and a little beyond that to Foyers where we could catch a bus back to Inverness. The countryside was lovely, the loch with its black water was impressive, but, alas we caught no sight of Nessie.

It was cold in the Highlands but tulip time in Holland so early the next morning we boarded the train for an all day’s ride to Harwich. Overnighted there and early next morning took the ferry to Hook of Holland. The North Sea was rough and many of the passengers were

stricken with *mal-de-mer*. The deck was overcrowded, a shortage of seats. Chrys commented that if this was first class she'd hate to see what second class was like. From Hook-of-Holland we caught the train to Amsterdam, found a hotel through a tourist-information office, booked into it for three nights.

While exploring the miles and miles of tulip fields the next day we struck up a conversation with a New York couple, about our own age, who were travelling with an organized tour group. They seemed amazed that a "middle-aged" couple would be wandering around in strange countries without reservations and without guides. We told them they should try it as it was a far better way to see the world than doing so with a pre-planned tour. We poked around in various odd places that the guided tours never get to, met lots of interesting people.

Unfortunately time was getting short; it was back to Hook of Holland, a smooth crossing at night to Harwich (with a cabin this time so we could get some sleep). The train to Weybridge and the friendly warmth of the Kyle's house at Hamm's Court.

We had one day left and decided to spend it in London so that we could answer all our neighbor's questions about the Palace and the Tower and Westminster Abbey and the like. The best thing about it was lunch at the Sherlock Holmes pub. The worst thing was the hordes of American tourists busily posing in front of this or that statue.

Early the next morning Dave and Ruth were off to France and the Tacketts were off to Heathrow and the long flight back to the U.S. Eight hours to Chicago, a four hour at O'Hare where we paid 90¢ for beer that wasn't good English ale, and then a couple of hours to Albuquerque.

The desert looked good after all that green.

Sticky Quarters #13, November 1985

1979: Terry Hughes

Terry Hughes attended Seacon ’79 in Brighton, Sussex, the 1979 Worldcon. The rival candidates were Fred Haskell and Suzanne Tompkins. Terry Hughes died in 2001.

Platform

Still (since 1971) publishes *Mota* after 25+ issues and several hundred typoes. Co-edited (with Chris Couch) the bi-weekly *High Times* (1972). Member APA 45 (1972), OMPA (1977), FAPA (1975 on). Frequent letterhack & contributor to various fanzines. Attended first convention in 1969 (St Louiscon) and has gone to several each year since, including 1978 Autoclave (as Guest of Honour). Serves as Assistant Editor for *Amazing*, *Fantastic* & *Science Fiction Five-Yearly*. Possesses a nose of legendary proportions and has a matching set of ears. Life-long ambitions include winning the Olympic gold medal for javelin catching and being selected TAFF delegate to Seacon.

Nominated by: Harry Bell, Pat Charnock, Lee Hoffman, Hank Luttrell and Tom Perry.

Two-Fisted TAFF Tales

Terry Hughes

Bam! The pool cue slammed into the back of my skull. I whirled around to face my attacker while at the same time checking my head with my left hand to feel if any important bits had fallen off. Being a TAFF winner was turning out to be far more dangerous than I had expected. I'd thought my biggest worry would be drunken fans pissing on my shoes – never in my worst TAFF-related nightmares did I imagine that someone would use a pool cue to change the shape of my cranium from convex to concave.

Wait a minute. If you feel bewildered, it's because I've gotten ahead of myself. Doing a TAFF report in non-chronological instalments in various fanzines can get very confusing, what with all the jumping back and forth through the timestream, not to mention splashing about in the puddles of my memory. Let me start over and I'll try to set the time and place.

It was 1979, the year I made my trip from the United States to the United Kingdom and the last year I could keep from seriously regarding Ronald Reagan as a potential occupant of the White House. My trip was due to winning the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, while Reagan's later success was due to the corrupt nature of America's capitalistic system and was in no way attributable to my actions overseas. There are those who maintain that both elections were indicative of the gullibility of the voters but I consider that attitude to be decidedly unfannish. It was Charles Burbee himself who told me that he voted for me but not to get big-headed about it since he had also voted for Richard Nixon. I'm pretty sure he was talking about different elections. In any case, I take a certain amount of pride in knowing that neither Nixon nor Reagan (nor Margaret Thatcher for that matter) has ever won TAFF (and no doubt they feel the same about me and the Presidency).

My TAFF trip didn't make the cover of *Time*, or get mentioned in the personality snippets of *People*, and even the *National Enquirer* refused to print the story when I told them that I couldn't supply photographs of Space Aliens on Earth, but *this* fanzine is publishing part of my TAFF report. (Any pictures of space aliens you find on my pages were provided by Brian.) This instalment concerns one of my adventures when I was in

the Newcastle area.

Newcastle, or I guess I should say Newcastle-upon-Tyne to be proper and to distinguish it from Newcastle-under-Lyme where I didn't have any adventures whatsoever, had been a special British city in my mind for many years before I ever went there. You see, Newcastle was the home of The Animals, which was my favorite group of the horde of rock'n'roll bands that made up the British Invasion of America in the 1960s. At the time of my trip, however, the Animals had long since broken up and so Newcastle was then better known to me as the home of the Gannets. Despite what some members might have claimed, the Gannets weren't a rock'n'roll band at all but rather they were the local SF group. Unlike in the US where fans who belong to clubs are known by names such as LASFans, NESFans, MoSFans, WSFans, et boring cetera, fans in Britain go under far more colourful names such as the Rats, the Brummies, the Surrey Limpwrists, and the Gannets. I think this difference in attitudes towards group names is a good indication of the differences in attitudes in general between the fandoms separated by the Atlantic Ocean. A gannet is a fish-eating bird (sort of a silly goose) which can understandably be identified with a port city like Newcastle. The fannish cartoon representation of a gannet is of a pudgy bird wearing a beanie, clutching a pint of Newcastle Brown Ale in one hand-like wing, and displaying a less than sober smile on its beak. In 1979 the Gannets had so much energy and so many members interested in fanzines that, in addition to their individual fanzines, they were also doing a regular group fanzine called *Gannetscrapbook*. This was not the same as other clubzines I had seen because each issue was edited by a different member of the group (chosen through some mystical method of rotation.) Naturally this led to fluctuations in terms of quality and style since each Gannet had his own ideas as to just how it should be done and this played bloody hell with traditional concepts of continuity, but it also gave the fanzine a special feeling and flavor (excuse me, "flavour") all its own. This was the sort of environment in which I found myself.

The adventure I'm going to tell you about only involves three of the Gannets – Harry Bell, Kevin and Sue Williams – but that's quite enough thank you. You are probably already aware of Harry since he is the best known of all Gannets and is one of fandom's most popular artists (it was Harry who created the cartoony Gannet emblem) and publisher of a great many fanzines which have given increased meaning to the term "infrequent". So I don't think I need to introduce him to you – besides I gave him the full treatment in an earlier instalment of my TAFF report (in

Wing Window #7) when I told how Harry Bell revealed secret facts about toilet paper.

You might not be quite as familiar with Kev and Sue Williams. To begin with, they are man and wife, and not brother and sister. I want to make that clear since on one or two occasions when my brain wasn't functioning at its usual lightning-fast rate I made an embarrassing reference to "Kev and Sue Smith". Needless to say such remarks generated laughter and abuse directed towards me. There I was giving a future TAFF winner (Kev Smith) an unexpected bridge, and forcing poor Sue Williams to commit bigamy (or worse). I guess I just got confused by the abundance of Kevins in British fandom at the time. Still it could have been worse: I could have said "Kev and Sue Easthope."

Kevin Williams was in charge of operations at Seacon (the 1979 Worldcon) and as such was instrumental in keeping the convention running smoothly. With a job like that, however, he was kept so busy that he wasn't all that visible during the convention, at least during the day, and so I ended up seeing more of him after the con than while it was going on. Kevin has dark hair and a matching moustache and a pair of glasses which only slightly distorts the fannish twinkle in his eyes.

I realize that this is the sort of physical description which could apply equally well to Seacon chairman Peter Weston or several hundred other fans, but I assure you that Kevin Williams is not a clone of Peter Weston. Sue Williams can vouch for that. Being in charge of operations implies a high degree of organization and an ability to manage time wisely and during Seacon these qualities certainly applied to Kev. Outside the Worldcon however... well let's just say that these traits of his couldn't withstand the Harry Bell syndrome. In an effort to get Harry to do a regular fanzine Kevin offered to help out and the jointly edited *Out of the Blue* was the result. Clearly both Kevin and Harry felt that Kevin's extra push would result in a frequent fanzine. *Out of the Blue* has been an excellent fanzine, filled with witty writing and great art, but it has been anything but frequent. The two of them began work on the fanzine some six months before the worldcon and ended up only missing Seacon by four pages. So we can no longer say that punctuality is Kevin Williams's middle name (and a good thing too because punctuality makes for a terrible middle name).

Sue Williams has neither Harry Bell's blond hair nor her husband's moustache, so in terms of physical appearance she can only be described as a very attractive brunette. Her activities at the worldcon involved both Harry Bell and bedsheets. Wipe that smirk off your face because it wasn't

anything like what you're thinking. Sue was in charge of preparing the huge Seacon backdrop. As you probably remember Harry had created a delightful emblem for the British worldcon bid which consisted of a Harry Bell-type critter encircled by a banner reading: "Britain is fine in '79!" which was featured not only on literature but also on hundreds of buttons. After winning the right to hold the 1979 worldcon, the Seacon committee continued to use this as the convention symbol. It was Sue's job to transform this button-sized illustration into a movie screen-sized banner. She made this by sewing several bedsheets together and then painstakingly copying the image onto it. After this was done, she then had to iron the backdrop so that it looked wrinkle-free when it was unfurled from the ceiling during the worldcon opening ceremonies. She ended up using the floor of her workroom at the hotel, as an ironing board but that was even more complex than it sounds since the banner was larger than the floorspace of the hotel workroom. With the aid of assistants she got the job done and the backdrop made for an impressive sight. It was a magnificent symbol for the Worldcon and at the same time served as a very nice tribute to Harry Bell, who was the fan guest of honour at Seacon. Sue Williams is the only person I know who has used an iron to do her fanac.

I was staying at Harry Bell's house in Gateshead – Gateshead is just across the river from Newcastle and is its largest suburb although it is a major city in its own rights even if its only claim to fame is that Harry Bell lives there – so the Williamses picked us up and took me off for a history lesson. I had made some sort of remark about how I was living in the Washington, D.C. area where there were plenty of buildings far older than anything I was used to in the American Midwest and they had just sort of snorted and said that bloody colonials don't even know what old is. This trio of Gannets were going to take me to see the Housesteads Roman Fort to give me the proper perspective on things.

The Roman ruins were in the upper part of Northumberland, near the border with Scotland which is a longer drive from Newcastle than it looks on the map, due in part because of the nature of the British roadway system which, apart from the M series of highways, isn't really geared for speedy travel. Our journey took a bit longer also because we were going to stop at a pub for lunch along the way. Not just any pub, mind you, but a pub that none of the Gannets had been to before. Although there were a great many pubs between Newcastle and Housesteads Roman Fort, this was no easy proposition since they had made this journey before which meant that there were few pubs along the way that they hadn't already sampled. Evidently this was a point of honour with them. It certainly made

for an interesting trip since every time we neared a pub, we'd slow down and compare notes to see if anyone had been in the pub in question and invariably the answer was yes and we'd tool along until the next one. My ruse of calling out "There's one I haven't been to before!" must have been clumsy because they saw through it every time. Looking back on it, I think that rather than trying to find a "virgin" pub, they were actually trying to find the one pub in all of Northumberland where I could get hit in the head with a pool cue.

The pub looked innocent enough from the outside, in fact it looked most inviting in its country setting. Then again, a venus flytrap looks nice from the outside, too.

We each got a draft of the house lager and I think we each got a plowman's lunch, at least I know I did. A plowman's lunch consists of a hunk of bread, some cheese and some fresh vegetables (like celery and carrots) and makes for a perfect light midday snack. The pub was crowded and the only available table was in the room adjacent to the bar where the pool/billiards table was. A game was in progress but there was plenty of clearance by our table, or so I thought as I sat there, the one with his back to the pool table. Perhaps the British go through some training at an early age that instructs them never to turn their backs to someone holding a pool cue but, if so, these Gannets failed to pass this information along to me. Being from the States I wasn't used to having dining tables in the same room with pool tables. In the pool halls I've known the only seats were along the walls where no one could get behind you. For whatever reason my sense of self-preservation must have been napping because I took my suicide seat. About three bites into my meal I heard a grunt from behind me which might have been "Move!" but which didn't register with me. This was followed quickly by the buttend of a pool cue smashing into the back of my head as one of the players yanked the cue back for his shot. When I turned around in my seat the guy wasn't even paying me any attention. I would have returned his greeting in a proper American fashion except that I hadn't brought either a .357 Magnum or a chainsaw with me. Instead of creating an international incident, I mumbled into my beer that I hoped he had missed his shot. Harry tried to assure me that this was a traditional British welcome given to all TAFF delegates but I refused to be hoodwinked. (Clubbed, yes. Hoodwinked, no.) A planter's lunch with a planter's punch.

The sun was shining with only a few fluffy clouds in the sky during the entire journey through the English countryside, up till we reached the Roman fort. As soon as Kevin had shut the motor off, rain drops began

splashing against the windshield. I was for seeing the ruins despite this and so were Harry, Kev and Sue. We hadn't come all this way to be put off by a little water. We had gone only a few paces from the car when Mother Nature realized that we were undaunted by a light rain and so it began in earnest. Huge drops of water and lots of them. We retreated to the car trunk where Kevin checked out their supply of raingear. There was one actual rain slicker which Sue got, of course, since she was no fool and besides the other three of us were intent on being manly men. Kevin had two lab coats from his work as a research chemist. He took one which fit him perfectly and I got the other one which would also have fit him perfectly. Unfortunately my girth was far greater than Kevin's so it managed to only cover part of me. In any case, lab coats were not designed to be water repellant so they quickly became soaked. Harry had a leather jacket with him and he was making do with that and his *Omni* bag. Ah yes, the *Omni* bag. As an advertising ploy at Seacon, *Omni* magazine was giving away free black plastic bags suitable for carrying book and magazine purchases and they were a hit in the hucksters room. Harry had one of these with him and turned it into an impromptu rainhat by pulling it over his head. As we ran up the rise to the ruins, we must have looked pretty damned foolish. We certainly felt that way. As we were standing on what was left of the wall dividing the Roman territory from the land of the unruly Picts, I think we must have looked like creative anachronists in reverse. No, not creative anachronists, but rather creative futurists... only with limited resources. I will admit that if you look at Harry Bell through squinting, rain-filled eyes as I did that in profile the black shopping bag did rather look like a Roman Centurion's helmet except for the colour and the *Omni* logo on the side which sort of spoiled the effect. There was simply no way, however, that white lab coats could pass for breastplates, especially not when I couldn't even close mine around my chest.

The Roman fort was built along a natural ridge which the Romans had reinforced with the thick walls of the fort (sort of a Great Wall of China in miniature). While the land rose gently to the ridge on the side we walked up (the Roman side), on the other side of the wall it fell away rapidly. This meant that the Picts would have to charge up a steep slope when they attacked the Roman fort, which evidently was a hobby of theirs. Dashing up that ridge would both tire the enemy out and leave them as easy targets for quite a distance. I assume that raids against the Romans must have served as a sort of involuntary form of population control for the Picts since the survival rate from such attacks couldn't have been too great. Still it can not be denied that it was the Romans who left the country

so the Picts must have known what they were doing.

It was easy to visualize such battles while standing on the wall but even if the four of us had been swept up by some rogue timewarp and deposited back in those days I think we would have done okay. No self-respecting Pict would have attacked any group of people that looked as ridiculous as we four SF fans with our lab coats and *Omni* bags.

We split up, each individually exploring the ruins. I went over to Harry and he pointed to a certain area of the stone ruins and informed me that that was a Roman latrine. I nodded appreciatively and wandered away before he could tell me any stories about Roman toilet paper. Kevin waved me over to his section of the wall and pointed out a different group of stones and confided to me that this was a Roman latrine. I thanked him for this insight an strolled over to where Sue was standing. She grabbed my arm and turned me to face yet another section of the ruins and let me know that here was a Roman latrine. Since these three distinct parts of the fort looked quite different from each other, I knew that someone (well two someones actually) had to be wrong. I was also beginning to get a bit worried about this apparent shared obsession with Roman latrines. What would Freud have made of this? Better yet, what would Laney have made of it? It wasn't until we went inside the visitors' building to make use of some modern day latrines that I saw a postcard which showed me what the true Roman latrine looked like.

After having thoroughly explored the Roman fort, we squished back to the car to head back to Newcastle. Naturally enough as soon as the car doors were opened the rain stopped. We sat there making puddles on the upholstery, smiling big smiles and feeling good about having done a bit of time travelling. As we headed off, one small part of my mind was wondering if that guy in the pub would have hit me with his pool cue if I had been wearing a white lab coat and a black *Omni* bag.

Sticky Quarters #13, November 1985

An Excerpt from Chapter Nine

Terry Hughes Sez

In a recent letter, John D. Berry wrote that he was depending on me to supply the connection to fandom for this issue of *Wing Window*. John's actual choice of words was something about "topical fannish tie-ins", whatever the hell they are. His message was clear: he wanted me to provide the fannish touchstone for the issue. Me! When something like this takes place, it just confirms my belief that these are damned strange times in which we live.

Instead of an account of my personal relationship with Santa Claus or my theory about the invention of the enema, I'm supposed to write something that relates to fandom. This has not been Mr. Berry's wisest exercise of editorial judgment. What do I know about fandom these days?

Oh sure, I did go to the worldcon in Baltimore last year, but that hardly makes me an active fan again. I mean at the convention I went to a program item on the care and feeding of neofans because a couple of my friends were on the panel, and that alone should disqualify me. At one point it was asked if there were any neofans in the audience or whether the only ones present were on the panel. Scattered hands were raised in the small crowd. Then it was asked if there were any BNFs present, and the bulk of the audience raised their arms (or legs as the case may be). Taking the matter to the other extreme, someone asked if there were any gafiates out there. Several people turned to look at me, so I proudly held my hand up in the air.

Just because I was voted Most Gafiated Fan at the worldcon, however, that doesn't mean there aren't people in the world who are more out of touch than even I am. Take Peter Roberts in Britain, for instance. He started slipping away back when I still regarded my mimeograph as a useful machine instead of an oversize paperweight. The first sign of his impending gafiation came in EGG #11, where he ran the first two parts of his account of his 1977 TAFF trip (dangerous things, those TAFF reports). Not coincidentally that was the last EGG he published, and that was done in May 1979. Next Peter began distributing chapters of his TAFF report to various fanzines so that he'd have a ready excuse whenever anyone asked why he wasn't doing any fanac: "It's not my fault. Go ask Fan X why he

(or she) hasn't published the next section of my TAFF report. Bloody hell." Only a fan sinking into serious gafiation would use that old ruse of printing chunks of his TAFF report in other people's fanzines. Shortly thereafter Peter began bad-mouthing Her Majesty's Postal Service for failing to safely deliver his next TAFF chapter to his next fanzine editor – but that didn't fool anyone outside of his immediate family and the BSFA. After that, things deteriorated rapidly until today he spends more money on photography equipment than on stencils and postage. Why Peter's so far gone that he wrote to *me* asking what was going on in fandom these days.

First Peter Roberts and now John Berry – *some*thing is going on here. Now I'm used to Jeff Schalles asking, "What's new in fandom, Terry?" because he knows I'll offer to buy him a drink to shut him up. As for Peter and John, well, I just don't know. Maybe it's a side effect of all those drugs they used to, ah, read about.

In any case, if John thinks he can coerce me into mentioning fandom in *my* column, then he doesn't know me very well. Even gafiates have ethical standards.

An Excerpt from Chapter Nine of the Terry Hughes TAFF Report (coming soon to a mailbox near you)

I can't look at a roll of toilet paper without thinking of Harry Bell. This is not a common reaction, I grant you. The name Harry Bell makes most people think of one of the most talented cartoonists in fandom. Some will think of him as the editor of such fanzines as *The Grimling Bosch*, *Tocsin/Kamikaze*, and, more recently, *Out of the Blue*. There are also those who'll think of him as a witty and entertaining drinking companion, and others will regard him as the driving force behind the Silicons. A few may recall him as a good-looking guy who does embarrassing things after drinking two or three bottles of Bell's Scotch Whisky on an empty stomach. The general consensus would probably be that he's one of the leading pillars of British fandom (that's *leading*, not *leaning*). I regard him as all these things and more, but that doesn't alter the fact that Harry Bell and toilet paper are forever linked in my mind. That's because Harry Bell was the first (and so far only) person to tell me about the Toilet Paper Sex Test.

According to Harry, toilet paper placed on the spool so that it unrolls

from the top indicates masculinity while paper positioned to unroll from the bottom indicates femininity. Harry said he got this insight from no less a source than a newspaper feature.

At this point in my TAFF report you would be looking at detailed schematic drawings of the two possible positions for toilet paper rolls in the standard household dispenser. (I will admit that this amounts to an exceedingly limited Kama Sutra.) Unfortunately *Wing Window*'s publisher is too cheap to give his columnists any luxuries such as illustrations for their contributions or retirement plans for their old age. So instead you will have to use your imagination to visualize Position #l and Position #2. (Those of you having difficulty with this due to weakened imaginations caused by prolonged viewing of television can obtain diagrams by mailing stamped, self-addressed envelopes to Harry Bell.)

My mother warned me about the British and their toilet paper. When I was pre-paring to leave on my 1979 TAFF trip to Britain, I got a long-distance telephone call from her. She wanted me to know that British toilet paper was thin waxy stuff – an altogether inferior product. She seemed to think that their toilet paper might be what causes them to talk the strange way they do. Her warnings were based on experiences from the early 1950s, but sometime before 1979 the British must have cracked the secret of American high-tech toilet paper, because by the time I got over there theirs was on a par with ours. She didn't warn me that the British would carry things so far as to use toilet paper as a test for masculinity.

Harry explained this theory to me when I was visiting him in Gateshead. He told me about it because I had put some toilet paper in the wrong way my first morning at his place. Prior to his recrimination I had never given any thought to which way I put the roll in the dispenser; my sole concern had been that the toilet paper would be there when I needed it. I guess Harry was afraid that the Toilet Paper Police would check out his bathroom and draw the wrong conclusions. I already had enough to worry about in a bathroom without adding toilet paper positioning to the list. It is more than a little disconcerting to think that guests may draw conclusions about my sexuality from the way I hang toilet paper.

In any case I have my doubts about the validity of Harry's Toilet Paper Sex Test. I mean mimeographs all feed their paper through from the bottom. Does this mean that fanzine fans are all a bunch of wimps? Wait a minute; that's a bad example. (Besides, you don't need the Toilet Paper Test to reach that conclusion.) What about calculators? The vast majority of the hard-copy calculators are designed to feed their tape from the bottom. Does this mean that accountants are less than totally macho?

Okay, okay. Maybe Harry is on to something.

Of course there is a way to eliminate this fear of judgment based on toilet paper positioning. It was developed years ago by Jim Turner in Columbia, Missouri. (This was way before the Toilet Paper Sex Test was devised, but then Turner always was a fan of vision.) He dispensed with toilet paper altogether and instead used the pages from an old telephone directory.

I wonder how Harry Bell's theory would classify that?

Wing Window #7, February 1984

1981: Stu Shiffman

Stu Shiffman attended Yorcon II, the 1981 UK Eastercon in Leeds, West Yorkshire. The rival candidate was Gary Farber. Stu Shiffman died in 2014.

Platform

Active in fanzine circles with both art and writing in such zines as *Mainstream*, *Rune*, *DNQ*, *Nabu* and *Janus*. Has illustrated the playscripts of several fanmusicals (*The Mimeo Man*, *Rivets Redux* and *The Decomposers*). Co-editor of *Raffles*. Hugo and FAAn award nominee for past two years. Chairman of the Flushing in 1980 bid. Member of the New York in ’86 committee and FAAn Award committee. Meeting host of New York City’s Fanoclasts. An interest in history and archaeology has led him to the latest ancient truths about the fannish ghod Roscoe.

Nominators: Harry Bell, Mike Glicksohn, Mike Glyer, Jerry Kaufman and Peter Roberts.

Suddenly, Last Winter

Stu Shiffman

The anticipation was almost unendurable. Everyday during the crucial week last December I felt that I *must* call muvian guru T. Hughes of Old Virginia and learn the truth. Yes, that terrible eldritch revelation that would mean that I was the new TAFF delegate or provide an excuse for suicide. Oh, how could I continue to live if the sinister and evial (and thin) Gary Farber, hidden in the Forbidden City of Seattlewa, were to triumph over me? I was a great pain to my friends.

"Stu," said Sue-Rae Rosenfeld, "you are a great pain to your friends." "Shiffman!" remarked D. Potter casually. "You are a meshuggenah!" "I'm sorry, Stu," counselled Moshe Feder. "We all feel for your personal anguish and dreary life full of pathos and terror – step on that roach please, Potter – but you'll have to buck up and win gracefully. There is no other alternative. I can only live this trip vicariously if *you* go to Yorcon and write a report. Thou art the Protagonist... so go and protagonize." My erstwhile co-editor on *Raffles*, "The Fanzine of Wise Cracks", Larry "Scoop" Carmody of the Mineola Carmodys, was curiously absent because of some lightweight excuse like Work. Otherwise, I am quite sure, he would have lent symmetry to this episode by telling me this:

"Stu," Larry would have said, "you are a great pain to your friends."

This publication has been inspected and approved by Special Agent F.M. Symbolist of the Fanzine Bureaucracy International. It is rated A-1 and safe to drink.

Eventually my torment was ended. Now began the most harrowing moments of all – finding people to tell so that they could congratulate me. This was not too difficult... great masses of fans live in my apartment building. I climbed to the second floor (our building has British-style numbering of the floors) to Sue-Rae's apartment. Huge numbers of fannish layabouts were there for tea and cookies.

Carmody was there, as he had spent the day not looking for an apartment to share with Frank Balazs. Frank is one of the very few people with degrees in Folklore and Hungarian to be working in Herb and Spice

shops. He labours at “Aphrodisia”, a nationally-known store in [Greenberg] Greenwich Village;

D. Potter sipped her tea gracefully, the Tall Black Woman with One Blond Shoe. She looked surprised to see me. I’d mentioned earlier that I hadn’t felt like being with people that evening. She had responded, asking how that involved them. A mild ook upon her. It furthers one to seek the True Path.

My announcement was made was made, in my usual “ah, shucks” manner. They were wildly appreciative.

However, I now discover that I start all conversations with “Well, as TAFF Administrator for North America...” This must stop... but my doctor says that it won’t clear up for a couple of years yet.

(See the next exciting issue of Raffles*, its number five, for the next pre-TAFF report fragment. It’s entitled “Shiffman meets the Vile Huckster, or Sci-Fi Horror in the Comics Dungeon”. Be there and be square. Or at least rectangular.)*

Visitor’s Pass, April 1981

A Raffles Lad Abroad or The Road to Yorcon

1 • I Am Kidnapped by Pilots

Stu Shiffman

"No matter what happens, travel gives you a story to tell."
– appropriate Jewish aphorism

I was incredibly excited.

I was so excited that it seemed impossible to keep from bursting, and thereby require a cleanup team to get bits of Shiffman off the walls and out of the rug.

However, it turned out that I had hidden resources – and lasted to that golden morn of Friday, April 10, 1981. The Deborah of Broadway Terrace, Sue-Rae Rosenfeld, had suggested in a moment of inspiration that there be a sendoff party before the flight. It was a brilliant suggestion, getting the TAFF trip off to an early start and obtaining an early space reservation in my TAFF report.

I put in a lot of extra time at work that week, trying to get as much cleared away as possible. I was guaranteed my mere two weeks away by the production manager at Christian Dior Sleepwear and Ladies' Intimate Apparel, but it turned out to be a much busier time of year than anyone had expected. The big show of the company's lines was scheduled for shortly after my return, and everyone was getting very manic.

It's hell in women's undies.

My cheap watch had given up the ghost the week before. I filled in the temporally hag-ridden interval with my pocket-watch and a loaner from my Dad. But I needed a new watch, and it seemed that this particular day would be a good day for shopping. "Time flies," I thought in a clichéd manner, "and I had better be able to measure it!" There were plenty of stores on Thirty-Second Street that carried what I wanted, and so I headed over to the peculiarly titled "Camera World and Sound." How does a camera sound? "Click," primarily, unless it's a Japanese model.

Ahem....

Eli Cohen called about the party at my parents' before my flight. We worked fairly near to one another, and so arranged to meet at our usual corner by the Empire State building. That edifice is of a fair size, and so is difficult to misplace. Anyway, arrangements made, I took a break from clawing through a tangled skein of flesh, fabric and fashion (so to speak) and went off to lunch. Huzzah!

The day was warm – a springtime foreshadowing of the steampot that New York would become in the summer. I walked west along Thirty-Second Street from Madison Avenue, looked at the back of the Horace Greeley Statue at Greeley Square ("Go West, Young Man!"), and ended up at Broadway and CAMERA WORLD AND SOUND. Super.... I spotted the watch in the window that would suit my needs, a Casio with alarm and date features. Not a bad price, I thought, and went in. It took a while to get the attention of the expatriate Israelis at the timepiece counters – I suffer from unnoticeability from time to time. Wonders, I was noticed... yes, I want that watch... he writes out the order... "pay at the register"... "have a nice day." And time to return to the AM-1 Garment Computer without lunch – aha! I found a street hotdog cart, and that frankfurter with brown mustard along with a long orange juice (freshly squeezed Florida orange juice) from the corner stand became my noontime repast.

I went back to a busy VDT and a goodly pile of work. I tend to get rather wrapped up with the work, so that around 5 p.m I was surprised to look up and notice the extreme absence of anyone in the room. That left me alone to do the SSAVE (a tape of all storage channels) – an operation that sometimes takes as long as a half-hour. Ghod looked kindly upon me, at 5:15 I was on my way to meet Eli.

"I'm sorry to be late," I puffed as I ran across Fifth Avenue. "More problems. I just got a new watch and need the instruction booklet – I didn't get one when I bought it."

"Oh sure," said Eli, " – it's getting late 'though – are you sure you need it?"

"I think so... it beeps on the hour and today's not Tuesday the twenty-fifth...."

"No..." replied Eli, "...that's quite true." And we were off to C.W.&S.

It was a wonderful scene as the clerk searched for a loose booklet only to end up giving me one taped to another box. Swell.

"We'll take the E train from Penn Station," I called. We set off for there. Eli then pointed out that the F train was closer, so we ran back towards Greeley Square for the entrance there. We were waiting for the light at the street corner to change when Eli asked another question.

“Do you have film?”

“Whuh? No, No – I’d expect that they’ll have film in Britain....”

“Sure, but at a ridiculous price... you better get it here.”

“But it’s getting *LATE*!” I whined. I’d misplaced my cool. I had to concede the sensibility of Eli’s suggestion, and we hurried back to the camera store row that exists on Thirty-Second Street. There I bought six rolls of colour print film, threw them into my bag and ran off again towards the F train.

We suspended ourselves in the rush hour crowd within the subway car.

There was a good crowd at my parents’ house in Flushing (famed in song and story). I had, with the connivance of the parental units, invited some of my best friends for dinner and to see me off at Kennedy Airport. Well, they hadn’t been able to come, so Eli and I were greeted by the impatient cries of Sue-Rae Rosenfeld, Moshe Feder, Lis Eisenberg, D. Potter and Bill Wagner. My sister’s friend Debbie Sprung was there too – getting a bit of exercise staying out of Bill’s arm’s reach. They are a lunatic crew and I was glad to have them there. Larry Carmody, my erstwhile co-editor, was not able to make it, covering a truly spectacular junior high school basketball game for NEWSDAY (the commuters’ friend).

Such, then, is life.

My mother, archetypal Jewish mother that she is, made entirely too much food. Bill Wagner attempted to compensate for our low numbers by taking the traditional Internal Revenue share... this seemed to solve the problem, though everyone else now had short rations.

Then to the airport, said my mother. She always gets a bit paranoid about the traffic on the highway. Fine, I thought, but I still had some last minute packing to do. My companions didn’t take that too well. “Fugghead” was commonly heard. But we did get out of there, and into the cars and south on the Van Wyck Expressway to JFK.

Can’t take them anywhere – they always embarrass me! By the time I get checked in at the terminal I’ve gotten tired and a bit giddy – not enough sleep the night before. My parents weren’t too clinging. However, my mother had that expression on her face that I’d last seen fourteen or more years before when I first went off to Summer Camp. I assured her that I would be fine.

She asked me to tell Dave and Hazel Langford to look after me. *sigh* I don’t think she could quite believe that I was twenty-seven years old.

They *did* get me on the plane – let's see my notes there:

Fri. Nite – I feel incredibly bubbly [Can *you* believe I wrote "bubbly"?] – I'm sure that it's partly from the lack of sleep last night (anticipation and threads of Jonathan Carroll's THE LAND OF LAUGHS in my head) and partly from the sheer exhaustion of the workday and exhilaration of this special adventure. [Gee, I'm a real goshwowboyoboy type, aren't I?] It worked out so perfectly – the dinner with the family and close friends, the airport tomfoolery [Hey! Good name for a musical review!] and all. Wagner is the absolutely perfect Goon.

"Everyone," he called out at the boarding gate, "this man is being deported for income tax evasion!" and "Make room – he's running away from his four wives!" He's a good buddy – glad there's a fan downstairs when I hold Fanoclast meetings.

D. Potter – tall, black and beautiful – says to bring her back a test tube of Thames water. I remember her hiding from my sister Robin's camera. It's ridiculous that she should be so camera-shy. Sue-Rae instructs me to tell the Queen "mazel-tov" on the impending wedding of her son. I promise to do that – if HRM shows up at Yorcon.

The Adventure starts....

Right... the TWA flight scheduled for 11 p.m departure was forty-five minutes late. It seemed somehow natural after all the subway delays of the last few days. The takeoff is one of my favorite experiences of air travel (right next to landing safely). The rapid rush forward is a very fine thing, and then the wonder of tons of metal leaping into the air. I always feel sorry for those who dislike air travel. It's one of the great things of modern technological living.

I leaned back and fell asleep.

2 • Over Here – First Contact

"The brutal Saxon invaders drove the Britons westward into Wales and compelled them to become Welsh; it is now considered doubtful whether this was a Good Thing. Memorable among the Saxon warriors were Hengist and his wife (or horse?) Horsa. Hengist made himself King in the South. Thus Hengist was the first English King and his wife (or horse), Horsa, the first English Queen (or horse). The

country was now almost entirely inhabited by Saxons and was therefore renamed England, and thus (naturally) soon became C. of E. This was a Good Thing....”

1066 and All That by Sellar and Yeatman © 1931

“ – Et la route, fait elle aussi un grand tour?
– Oh, bien certainement, etant donne qu’elle circonvient ala destinee et le bon sens.
– Puisqu’il le faut, alors! dit Jurgen; d’ailleurs je suis toujours dispose a gouter n’importe quel breuvage au moins un fois.
– La Haulte Histoire de Jurgen”

The Silver Stallion by James Branch Cabell

Actually beginning the descent to Heathrow came as a bit of a surprise. I viewed it as just another evial attempt by TWA to wake me up just as I was falling asleep again.

Every time I’d drop off, we’d be forced to wake up and eat or drink something. My body, stubborn fella, refused to assimilate the airline food. It was second guessing me again.

They showed a film called *Coast to Coast* which I caught snippets of each time I awoke. It looked really terrible, about a rich woman (Candice Bergen or Dyan Cannon) who escapes from a sanitarium and hooks up with a cross-country truckdriver. I decided to view it as a picaresque quest tale with elements of the Theater of the Absurd. I’m sure it made more sense that way.

The elderly Irish gentleman seated adjacently woke me up as the plane began to land. “This is it, kid,” I thought to myself. “Your chance to answer the musical question, ‘Does England really Swing Like a Pendulum Do?’”

Going towards the British Customs, we fresh arrivals encountered various signs exhorting us to practice auto-*selectsia*. As people well-socialized by our Modern Culture often do, we followed these signs to the letter. This meant that we divided ourselves into groups defined as “British and Commonwealth passport-holders,” “European Economic Community passport-holders,” and “*Other* overseas arrivals.”

I take direction easily.

Snaking towards passport examination, I entertained the brief fantasy of running into Ian Maule there at Heathrow. (I later learned that his

Customary duties involved large foreign crates rather than interrogating overweight American tourists). I was prepared for a scenario full of extremely heavy irony and coincidence.

Nope, that didn't work out. One more tired civil servant stamped my crisp new passport with the photo that made me look three weeks dead. I assured him that my purpose in visiting his country (99 year lease) was the pleasure of infusing dollars into the economy – although not in those words, of course.

It went more like:

"...uh... I'm visiting... like friends... and... uh, sightseeing...."

Adlibbing is not my mundane-world forte. Still, more signs and portents beckoned me: "Way Out" and Red and Green zones for customs. Since the only thing I had to declare was that I was damn glad to have arrived, I made my way out through the left ("Nothing to Declare") side. This side was empty except for a large Pakistani family stopped by a Customs officer. He was examining what appeared to be a small sack of grain. Freddy Laker should have been providing better meals than that....

Flight 708 had come late. I wondered what my reception would be. Steve Stiles, my slan-like memory remembered, had been greeted by a little girl belonging to Eric Bentcliffe who identified him as Jesus. Walt Willis had found himself the object of competition by rival fan delegations on both his trips. The Langfords with accompanying Jim Barker and Harry Bell had been met by an extremely sweaty and hyper Stu Shiffman. I determined *not* to look like the hunchbacked Mexican dwarf that they expected through some ~~sea~~ air change.

I made my way past the grasping hands of the riffraff there to meet international terrorists and other religious leaders. The mass of faces soon resolved into the shaggy-headed Dave and distressed-yet-joyful Hazel Langford. We waved wildly at each other and I moved towards them. When we were close enough Mister Langford, highly original nuclear physicist that he is, declared "Welcome to Britain in the name of the Surrey Limpwrists!" My brain added "...and the Great Jehovah."

The rest is history – sort of. We headed towards the parking area while the Langfords filled my waiting ears with multiple horrors.

Amid apologies about the state of their car, they explained about traffic jams at the airport and sinisterly steep ramps that forced Hazel to get out to lessen the load. She ended up having to walk up the ramp while Dave eased the Ford Anglia up. "Isn't it warm!" they said. Since I was wearing a denim vest and my heavy new trenchcoat I was able to agree.

The much deprecated 1966 Ford Anglia proved to be a small pale-

green vehicle that looked like a shrunken version of the 1956 Ford Fairlane driven by my parents 1956-1966. I decided that the Langfords were *so* anxious to make a good impression on one used to US juggernauts that they were over reacting. It did occur to me, however, that there might be trouble fitting my suitcase. That object appeared at first to be around half the size of the whole car.

We got settled and I stretched out in the back seat. That was very nice after a cramped airline seat. We negotiated the highways in a Reading-ward direction. How odd it seemed to see the traffic reversed – even though I had expected it. The land on the sides of the highway was very green and flat and tended looking. That was strange and delightful. I'm used to ugly concrete and unmaintained greenery and even uglier adverts along the roads. I've spent too much time on the Long Island Espressway and the New Jersey Turnpike, I suppose, to have simply accepted these British roadways without remark. I just absorbed the sights... and eventually gave in to sleep.

I woke when we came to Reading, that Pearl of Berkshire. A highway sign indicated a choice of Basingstoke (ah, Basingstoke, m'dear) or Reading. Dave chose Reading and Home and Hearth.

By spectacular coincidence, Reading looks rather "British" to me. I haven't quite figured out why – aside from all the Britons and signs in English. We soon found ourselves on Northumberland Avenue, a quiet and clean residential street with two-way traffic. The famous Number Twenty-Two proved to be the end building of attached houses – right next door to a pleasant red-brick school (mercifully closed). Splendid, I thought, Childe Stuart to *Schloss* Langford comes. Dave gave me a hand with the bags and Hazel proudly led me in. It's a narrow house that seems well-filled with bulging bookcases, Art Nouveau posters by Alphonse Mucha (one of my favorites) and sundry items of interest. In short, you see, a fan's house.

A trip up the steep narrow stairway brought me up to the second (US terminology) or first (British) floor. Hazel ushered me into the guestroom that also served (in the slack season) as her library and office. It was dominated by a bunkbed, a bookcase filled with interesting volumes like Tuareg-English dictionaries, *I Was A Teenage Pharaoh* (well, not really) and such things, and a large clothes cabinet. I particularly like the stuffed mongoose. There was a good view of the back garden out the window. I unpacked a bit, and Dave and I shared goodies. He presented me with an official "TAFF Delegate" and "*Twll-Ddu*" buttons, and even tried to teach me to pronounce the latter. Something along the line of "Tooolthee" if memory serves. Along with came the new ish of that fine fanzine – and the

filthy swine even had the first instalment of his TAFF report in it! In return, I presented him with the brand-new first-edition Dell paperback of *The Snow Queen* by the charming and wonderful Joan Vinge (of the well-known Frenkel Family Singers). I drew his attention to the great cover by Leo and Diane Dillon, whose work I've admired since their Ace Special period. In addition, I unveiled the annotated rehearsal script of *The Mimeo Man* (with additional material from the final script) which eventually was auctioned off by Rog Peyton at Yorcon II. Dave ooh'd and ah'd politely.

Hazel offered to rectify the deficiencies of the airline cuisine by giving me something superior to TWA's food-like material. This offer was eagerly accepted, and I was soon tucking into some sausage and baked beans. I discovered the wonders of Hazel's home-made apple chutney (I even brought back a jar of her "Apple Chutney of the Third Kind" 30Jan81) and HP Brown Sauce. This miracle substance is like "A-1" Steak Sauce but is actually rather superior.

"If you're not overcome with jetlag," said Dave, "we can show you the points of interest in revenge for your tour of Washington Heights." This sounded fine to me – I didn't feel tired at all. So we set off....

The tour was rather extensive. I discovered that "glebe" as in the nearby Glebe Road refers to land belonging or yielding revenue to a parish church or ecclesiastical benefice. Perhaps that meant that the area was once the property of the medieval Reading Abbey. The walking tour provided some interesting items. One humorous sign announced the firm of "Brain & Brain – Solicitors – Commissioners for Oaths." Sensing that this was more than someone's belief that Two Heads are Better than One, I probed further. Dave and Hazel informed me that, rather than being a person in charge of the National Cursing League, a commissioner for oaths is essentially the same as a US Notary Public.

A sojourn in a local bookstore pointed out my personal stupidity in failing to convert any of my dollars at the airport. This left me to wander and drool. An Inspector Ghote mystery by H.R.F. Keating that I hadn't seen in New York? Pass it by, m'lad. Bernard Levin? Never heard of him before... book looked interesting, though. I asked Dave and Hazel if they knew of a novel or book tie-in with the series *An Englishman's Castle* (a fascinating history drama set in Nazis-had-won 1970s). They hadn't even heard of the series, admitting that they didn't watch TV much.

There were other sights, like the Town Hall-Library-Museum. The last had provided a good overview of local history, with relics of Roman, Saxon, Tudor and later times. Material on Reading Abbey, stuffed birds and animals, and a collection of Huntley & Palmer Biscuit tins. I can't

help it – I'm an unrepentant history freak. I love that type of stuff.

We'd even walked past Reading Gaol, as in *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Oscar Wilde wrote it while imprisoned there for having a "naughty" relationship with a peer's son. (Such things were not allowed, except in the private places of the rich and noble). There were some problems here – I'd get off some sterling quip and Dave would turn and say "Pardon?" This went on continuously: mumble, mumble... pardon?

There were dozens of little commonplace things along the way that drew my interest. A Pieter Stuyvesant (Virginian cigarettes) sign made me realize that Nieuw Amsterdam was not so far away. 320 years – that's not too many... I absorbed everything! A sex shop was marked "Sex Shop" in so plain a way as to be like one of the "generic brand" food items marketed in Stateside supermarkets. I think it even had the stripes. There was an OxFam storefront and ironmongers and greengrocers and pubs. All the pubs had those hand-painted signs that Americans know from films. Some were very detailed, like the sign that hung outside the Wellington Arms, and some simple or crude. The shops were small, of various coloured bricks and local stone. There wasn't a huge supermarket just around the corner.

I had begun to overdose on all the input by the time we returned to Northumberland Avenue. As a final assault on my short term memory storage, Dave pointed out a nearby house as the home of the Mayor and her husband.

We sat in the main room discussing British and North American Fandoms, the party on the next evening, plans to see Oxford Monday, and the infamous Martin Hoare and Katie McAulay's scheduled visit that evening.

We had tea, lots of tea. More, no doubt, than that dispensed by the Dreaded Flying NAAFI told of by the Goon Show. The Langfords were surprised to find that I liked tea. Americans, they said, were supposed to consume coffee to excess (hiya, Mr. Coffee Nerves). I despise coffee. And I also surprised them by taking my tea without milk, just a bit of sugar. Ah, well... my grandfather took his tea in a glass. People and their ways do tend to differ.

We were shaken from these startling revelations by the arrival of Kevin Smith. Mr. Smith wore his beard and height with great personal jauntiness – which seemed strange as he had just come from a collation of the British Science Fiction Association (BSFA) official o/r/g/o/n/e/ *samizdat* at the University of Reading. Kev is/was another of those people that you seem to have been friends with forever – without having ever met.

Such is the magic of fandom. Kev passed over a copy of *Matrix* in exchange for *Twll-Ddu* which wasn't quite a fair trade.

Kev, of course, wanted to know if I was being drowned with tea. Dave and Hazel, at this opening, leapt to inform him of my peculiar folk custom of taking my tea sans cowjuice. He was not quite as scandalized.

Kev couldn't stay long, having a trip back to Furthest Surbiton ahead of him. We'd see him the next night at the Langford's party however, so the briefness of the visit was not too much regretted.

All through this time, Hazel had been doing sundry things domestick in the kitchen. My offer of aid was declined, the kitchen being a private enterprise and I a welcome guest. Wonderful odors began to waft into where we sat before the gas fire. I anticipated wonderful things and continued reading Dave and Hazel excerpts from *An American's Guide to Britain* by Robin W. Winks. (I recognized his name from his excellent *The Historian As Detective*.) Some of it was quite absurd. I was not to read their like until I saw Alan Ferguson's tourist guide to the USA months later.

We had a delicious meal of pork curry – sharp but not sadistically intense – with Hazel's excellent home-made chutney on the side and papadum. We got into another comparative discussion about the USA and Britain. This time it was about fruits and vegetables and the difference in availability. The British don't have all of Florida's citrus crop shipped to them (as New York seems to have) and the year-round access to California's truck. Citrus fruit and such must come from Spain and north Africa or Israel. The species or varieties differ also – the cucumbers in Britain look rather eccentric – they have their own handles.

That meal was a fine and wonderful thing. By this point, time was starting to march on, so I went upstairs to rest until Martin and Katie appeared for the evening's programming.

I stretched out on the top bunk but I didn't nap. I read the *Twll-Ddu* that Dave had given me. It contained, as I mentioned above, the first instalment of the Dreaded Langford TAFF report. The filthy swine had filled it with many True Facts which he had obtained by the low trick of taking voluminous notes at every opportunity. It was enormously funny and true-to-life. I hoped to do as well, and resolved to "quip" more. The problem is, I thought, that I never remember them when faced with the paper in the typewriter.

Martin Hoare and his lady, Katie McAulay, arrived – and they seemed to have prepared for the evening by starting their drinking at home. As predicted by Dave, Martin urged seizing the moment and getting

to the pub for some serious activity. Goshwow, I thought, a genuine English publick house. I now remembered meeting Martin at a stateside convention and we discovered mutual friends like Teresa Minambres.

Off we went to the Pheasant, a short walk away. Its sign, of course, showed a pheasant. The building, of local stone, was covered with a sweeping banner advertising a giveaway game sponsored by some brewer or bottler or other. It seemed more appropriate to a McDonald's.

The interior was panelled in wood and there was a large crowd around the bar. The sounds and textures of the voices swept over me. This type of atmosphere was strange. Nice Jewish boys shouldn't go to bars, y'know.

We found a corner table, and quickly covered it with filled glasses of a pleasant brew by the name of Director's. I only had a half-pint glass – being a half-pint type of person. I wasn't sure that my special pre-trip training with Larry Carmody had prepared me for a full-pint of British beer.

I found Katie's conversation amusing (in a nice way) – although I had to exhibit a "grain of patience" in having to actually *defend* the United States Postal Serpent against charges of grossly delaying the surface mailing of her company's magazine *Your Camera and You*. It apparently took millennia (or at least six weeks) for copies to reach North American subscribers. We all rigorously pointed out the decay in all Post Awful service, whether in the USA, Canada or the UK. Katie is a very pro-British booster. In retrospect, I find that Penelope Keith (of Brit sitcoms *Good Neighbors* and *To The Manor Born*) reminds me strongly of Katie. A rather posh upper-class accent.

I surprised myself by drinking another half-pint of Director's that evening, and Katie and Martin by not being a boozing American. I explained that I was not from a drinking family, etc. Not in stereotype, sorry, sahibs and memsabs. Huzzah. Katie was very understanding and explained that none of the U.S.'ers she'd ever met had confirmed the stereotype. I suppose that they were hoping to someday find one who did.

Meanwhile, with Hazel abstaining, Dave, Martin and Katie consumed Mass Quantities. We discussed computer systems with Martin, his several cars including a London taxi, and British comedy vs. US sitcoms in general – explaining why I like Monty Python and that Surreal Cosmic Bozo humour, Dave Allen and *Reginald Perrin*.

A man came around from the Seventh Day Adventists collecting for a medical mission. Martin and Katie gave. I admit privately (and perhaps... er... uncharitably) that I thought that they could obviously well afford it

while the Langford's can't. Hazel told us about her attitude in regard to religious canvassing. She sends them straight from the door, no discourse. "Unless they're coloured," she said. "Then I am polite and gently direct them hence. I suppose that I'm prejudiced – I like coloured people."

We got back to the house eventually. We had to – they closed the pub. Unfortunately, despite my personal resolution, we ended up in an elaborate political discussion prompted by my own comparison of Prime Minister Thatcher and our own well-beloved (feh, pooie) Ronald. A bad move, for, while we were all agreed on the truly junior fascist quality of the folks in the top posts, this led to a rather frustrating comparison of US and British governmental systems. Katie seemed unable to accept the golly-gee wonderfulness of having a written constitution and Bill of Rights and regularly scheduled elections of the executive. Yes, Katie, the US system *has* been known to work – usually just when you don't expect it to.

Sleep, I have to get to sleep. Tomorrow is another day and another chapter. Sitting in the top bunk, I wrote up my memories of the day in great detail. I resolved to do this every night.

I didn't. Goodnight... as soon as I finish reading another chunk of Jane Langley's *Memorial Hall Murder*. An intriguing mystery, I thought as I fell asleep, whodunnit??

Raffles #6, May 1982

1983: Avedon Carol

Avedon Carol attended Albacon II in Glasgow, Scotland, the 1983 UK Eastercon. The rival candidates were Grant Canfield, Larry Carmody and Taral Wayne.

Platform

Spurred on by a groundswell of support from all my friend, along with the usual fannish delusions, I've decided to jump right in and commit myself to show up in Britain, attend the appropriate convention, dazzle people with my strangely low-rent charm, and return to what's left of the USA to write a TAFF report and all that sort of thing. My credentials for this are that once upon a time I started reading sf, eventually discovered fandom, went to (and worked on) some conventions, wrote some things and built some fmz's, and even wrote some creditable con reports, one of which was fake. My hobbies include collecting the humour of Hemingway and wearing cheap shoes.

Nominated by: Malcolm Edwards & Chris Atkinson, Hazel & Dave Langford, Terry Carr, Gary Farber and D. Potter.

Untitled

Avedon Carol

They tell me that Albacon II was Not So Hot as Eastercons go, organizationally a mess and all that, but I couldn't tell. I had the good luck to be mostly unfamiliar with the normal run of local fanpolitics, and I wasn't in on the gory details, which I must say I found refreshing. Dave Langford showed up when he was supposed to, which was good enough for me. I had no trouble finding the Fanroom, and therefore the fans, which is the main thing. So as far as I was concerned everything was fine. My room was comfortable and conveniently located. I loved being able to make myself a cup of tea in the morning without having to get dressed first, and there were plenty of towels.... Must say I got a bit tired of the same old fish for lunch every day, and breakfast was too early. I certainly would have preferred a better grade of soft drink, but the bartender who kept grabbing his crotch supplied an interesting floorshow. I do wish, however, that D. West would take up a game which makes a more interesting spectator sport.... And everyone was really just absolutely triffic and you see if I write my TAFF report right now it will be all mushy and effusive and even maudlin and not very funny and – shit, now I know why no one ever finishes a TAFF report.

Ansible #33, June 1983

The Present State of Affairs

Avedon Carol

A couple of people have been watching me stop short in the middle of writing my TAFF report and telling me to go ahead and write it anyway and cheerleading at me all over the place. I doubt I have to say much to clarify what exactly had me so blocked on it, but you may not have had the pleasure of having your every word scrutinized to find The Most Sinister Possible Meaning.

Early last August I was over at the Gillilands' place using AAG's word processor and remarked that I was having trouble writing the damn trip report since I now felt like I couldn't say anything about D. West at all (I mean, who knows what sinister meaning could be found in the simple mention of the man's name, and what if, God forbid, I should make a – gasp! – typo?), and practically the only funny bits I could remember involved D. West (all two of them, mind you) in some way or other (one was just a joke of Malcolm's, but hey, it could, you know, MEAN something).

Anyway, I got all bogged down in it, because on the one hand I wanted to write it a certain way, and on the other hand I was so conscious of the ugly creature looking over my shoulder and re-interpreting my every word that I couldn't write any of it either. There was a point when I was sure I would never even look at it again, never wanted to hear of it again, at least until everyone I knew was dead or something.

Then I thought, well, maybe I'd write it, but I'd edit out all three of the jokes just so no one could "misunderstand" anything. I toyed with the idea of writing a TAFF report so bland that no one could possibly have a thing to say about it except, of course, that it was terribly dull and boring. Alternately, I could write a report containing a fully fictitious section about the Albacon banquet in which I find myself having incredibly delightful conversations with D. West, who is miraculously seated next to me instead of the dreadfully thoughtless, rude, and boring person who sat beside me in reality.

I have decided to write exactly the TAFF report I was planning to write. I will not delete all three jokes, nor any mention of D. West. If you want to pretend there is anything omitted that would have been there

otherwise, that's your tough luck and you're a suspicious and sinister person yourself. But it's my TAFF report and it's going to be written the way I wanted to write it in the first place.

Mind you, it may very well sit on that disk forever, or there may be one single print-out which will hide in a drawer somewhere never to be seen by another human soul, or it may even be published somewhere some day – but it will be a TAFF report that does not even admit of the last seven months, since they hadn't happened yet, and anyway, I'd rather keep a record of a good time than of a bad one.

Blatant #13, February 1985

1985: Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden

Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden attended Yorcon III in Leeds, West Yorkshire, the 1985 UK Eastercon. The rival candidates were Rich Coad and unofficially – not on the ballot but the subject of a substantial write-in campaign – Martha Beck.

Platform

Given our history of producing fanzines like *Telos*, *Zed*, & *Izzard* under trying and peripatetic circumstances (our motto: “At least we’ll get an article out of this....”) TAFF holds no terrors, we’ve been in training for it for years. If elected, we promise to sit up all night talking, sleep on floors, take part in whatever peculiar behaviours that UK fans wish to present as normal, and report it all as sober gospel truth – in print within the year or your money back. We also promise to neither marry nor inveigle away unattached members of British fandom. Amen.

Nominated by: Malcolm Edwards, Lucy Huntzinger, Jerry Kaufman & Suzanne Tompkins, Dave Langford, and Stu Shiffman.

Introductory

Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden

HEREWITH, THE FIRST INSTALLMENT of our TAFF report: we went, we came back, we had a marvelous time. Next, the details – and that's where it gets harder.

Oh, we made plenty of notes. We also brought back 465 snapshots, twelve hours of dictaphone cassette tape, and a large paper sack full of printed ephemera ranging from Northern Irish tourist pamphlets (a little earnest, but they try hard) to an authentic crumpled receipt from a Wimpy bar. Documentation, y'know.

And it doesn't really help; merely trades one set of problems for another. We'd planned to avoid the usual pattern of making detailed notes for the first three days and indecipherable jottings thereafter, leaving the hapless writer six months later desperately struggling to recall the possible significance of "BSFA mtg./spkr RR/ forester jk/!" (Though to be honest, we too have notes saying things like "Mdln: crphlly/ [*pi*] / how do y mk yr hat do that?") So what we've got instead is the whole of, or at least the most of, what seems to be a grossly improbable, inexplicable, untidy tale connected in some way to Woofie Bear, a demitasse spoon with a picture of the Queen Mother on the handle, a poodle-shaped balloon, a tabletop covered with scattered dominoes and the contents of an overturned ashtray, Chuch Harris at a series of typewriters, a faded notebook with "I hope the hotel doesn't sue" still legible across one page, Teresa prone on assorted floors, a twenty-cup capacity teapot, Tom Weber Jr. being dragged down a flight of stairs by grinning hooligans, a tape of a roomful of fans inexplicably breaking into Blake & Elgar's "Jerusalem," a great many pint mugs, Harry Bell on top of Durham Cathedral, a pebble-sized chunk of Scrabo Tower, Oxford's justly-famous spires and unjustly-neglected doorways of *exactly* proper height (5'5" to 5'8" – why do you ask?); *plus* a large and peculiar sheepdog, John Jarrold playing air-guitar to destruction, extensive demonstrations of the ancient peasant sport Falling Down at the One Tun, hundreds of people at Yorcon (all of whom seem to be either dancing or amiably sitting about with one hand cupped around an ear), and all those pictures Patrick took of sheep that didn't turn out (the pictures, that is; we don't know how the sheep are doing).

The worst patch in the record seems to be Saturday night at the Eastercon, which probably wouldn't have taken us quite so much by surprise if we hadn't been telling each other for years that British conreports are by custom composed largely of hyperbolic exaggeration. There'd been a steady light rain of anecdotes drizzling down all that day, making things a touch slippery underfoot but still manageable. Around early evening the downpour started and we all got soaked; memory thereafter is fragmented, brief moments of fitful illumination. We may never figure out exactly what we did that night, and in what order; but claiming to be hazy about what happened after dinner on Saturday is one custom of British conreporting that we did get right, and a very merciful literary convention it is, too.

Some things are easily recalled. The hospitality we encountered was generous beyond acknowledgement (we'll try, though), the friendliness of the fans ditto; we haven't run into so much good conversation in years. The food came as something of a shock, since all the guidebooks said it would be mediocre at best, and in fact we've been missing it since we came home. The weather was... er... easy to ignore, what with all the other splendid distractions to hand.

The problem in writing our trip report, then, won't be one of scraping together enough to say about it. Not hardly. There's enough for a book there, though we're not planning to write one. Beyond minor details like transcribing all those hours of tape, it becomes a problem of approach: how the hell does all this fit together? There's the pastoral "Traveling in Britain", the domestic sitcom "Patrick, Teresa, and Sometimes Tom in London and Leeds", the incisive, analytical critical essays (Kev and Sue Williams explaining the Silicon Method; Harris, Hansen, Vin¢ Clarke, both Langfords, and both Willises on wherefore and whither TAFF, with later added commentary from ATom, Peter Weston, &c.; not to mention the best panel discussion of fanzines & fanzine criticism we'd ever seen), the postmodern, non-linear, epic party and convention sequences; and of course the trivial yet terribly important bits and pieces and heaps of stuff about people and personalities, British fandom in the individual and specific sense, rather than as an abstract collective.

Well, we'll get an article out of this somehow.

Taffluvia #2, August 1985

Work in Progress

Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden

Most of you will have seen our note in *File:770* to this effect, but to recap briefly, the story on our TAFF report (and *Izzard 9*, and *The Complete TAFF Guide*, and...) is that Teresa recently suffered some rather worrisome heart irregularities, and while the cardiologist says she's basically okay, she's supposed to do everything she can to reduce the stress in her life. Since as a narcoleptic she can't very well cut out the prescription stimulants (though she did stop smoking), and she doesn't plan to quit her job, this means fanac: i.e., we're going to be slower than we'd like in finishing various joint projects. Just as proof that a report really is in the works, that we haven't in fact been lying around half-clothed reading the *Weekly World News* (much), though, what follows is a selection from our vast chromium-and-nickel-plated air-conditioned files. We were there. (We wish we still were.) Voila:

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1. Greg Pickersgill interrogates Alan Dorey: "Correct me if your interpretation of this is wrong, but..." Later, he explains that he was "*merely* trying to give Alan an out from a difficult situation." He seems puzzled that we still find the original line funny, not to mention characteristic.

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2. From chapter (x), by Teresa: *I Disgrace Myself Utterly in the Alan Dorey Quiz*

"I'm going to be in the quiz bowl," Tom [Weber] told me.

"Me too," said Patrick.

Chiz chiz chiz HOW DO THEY RATE? When I'm not hearing how Mike Dickinson and Malcolm Edwards think Tom is some sort of mutant because he, a mere American, has argued with them about M. John Harrison (they do not yet know that Tom will argue about anything), I'm getting called "quiet" on the same page of the program book where Patrick is puffed as "dapper" and "formidably erudite." As this bit was written by Rob Hansen, who has only talked to me in Patrick's company (or, better still, in Patrick and Moshe and Lisa's company) I think there may be some connection between my theoretical quiet and the volubility of Patrick's

erudition.

"No kidding," I say, with some restraint. "How do you guys rate?" Years may have gone by, but I have not forgotten that I was once rated the fastest finger on the button in the MileHiCon Trivia Bowl, nailing down three obscure questions about Zelazny's works in the final round when the opposing team had Roger Zelazny on it.

I mention this episode to Patrick. "Did I ever tell you about that?" I ask. "Ten or eleven times, dear," he responds.

Tom informs me that he and Patrick had simply happened to be on hand when fanroom mastermind Jimmy Robertson was rounding up teams. "Hell, I was already on 'Question Time'," says Patrick, referring to another spiff-sounding event I'd missed. "Why don't you simply be me for the quiz?"

I harrumphed, and went off to apply a vice grip and straightedge to my nose.

After a bit I wandered back into the fanroom. Rob and Patrick met me at the bar. "Hi," said Patrick. "It's arranged. You're going to be me."

"Starting when? And what are 'you' theoretically doing? Do I *hafta* be you? Is it reversible? What if someone slaps me on the back?" Rob explained that I would be taking Patrick's place on his team, The Guys In The White Hats, along with himself and Owen Whiteoak. Tom would be on the other team, captained by Greg Pickersgill. Rob helpfully added that his team had won all the previous annual quizzes. Not consoled, I mustered my state of panic into enough composure to go and buttonhole Jimmy about what kind of quiz this would be. "Don't warry," he told me. "Just quaystions on science feection an' fandom..." "Okay," I said. "I think."

I went back over to Rob and Patrick. In the meantime, opposing team honcho Greg had shown up, and was busily attempting psychology on a deeply unimpressed-looking Rob. "Well," he would say. "Ready for the Big Quiz now, yes indeed," and bounce up and down slightly on his toes while standing about three inches from Rob's face. Balling his fists he threw various short jabs and feints into the air, intoning "hup... hup hup... hup" into the interstices of the conversation, settling and resettling his jacket on his shoulders. Rob responded by draining his pint and ordering another. This titanic struggle of naked will continued until a problem came up with the AV setup in the next room, and Greg departed to show the hapless souls involved the error of their ways. "It's the suit," Rob laconically explained. "He always gets like this when he's wearing his white suit."

3. Jimmy Robertson waxes enthusiastic on fellow Scotsman Owen Whiteoak: “He’s got all these *grit* records, like *Wheat Rabbit*. They’re like the *gril* to him...” We nod and consult *sotto voce* in a desperate attempt to decode this intelligence.

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4. From chapter (y), by Patrick: *Chez Willis*

The guest room at Strathclyde looks out over the Irish Sea; on a clear day you can see Scotland, and most days you can see the lighthouse of Donaghadee looking uncannily like the lighthouse on the back covers of all those *Hyphen*s published years before the Willises moved out to the coast. Stacked neatly around the room were towels, clean sheets, incredible Irish apples, and other comforts; next to the bed was a copy of the Seacon edition of *The Enchanted Duplicator* upon which some hand had inscribed the word “Gideon”; and on the bed was an electric blanket.

Neither of us had ever slept under an electric blanket before. Neither of us had ever visited a country where “room temperature” is so cold that butter stays hard when left out, either. Having by then gone through several fannish households and the Eastercon in a state of mild hypothermia, unfamiliar or not the electric blanket was a godsend. We luxuriated, and remarked on it the next morning. “I wasn’t quite sure how to operate the controls,” I said. “Teresa kept wanting to turn it all the way up, but I kept thinking of all those high-voltage coils and wondering if we really knew what we were doing. Like, what were all those variable-current buttons about?” (Electrical appliances in the UK seem to demand rather more user knowledge of watts and volts and stuff than they do over here. I’d already despaired at alien, incomprehensible bathroom outlets, and taken to shaving with a safety razor instead; I’ve always felt a certain sympathy with James Thurber’s aunt who felt that electricity might leak out of empty sockets and spread wrongful vibrations throughout the house.)

“Oh, I wouldn’t worry, you can set the controls to whatever you want,” Madeleine reassured me. “The wiring can take it.”

“Thanks,” I said. “I mean, we were mostly concerned about how you’d feel if you woke up in the morning to the aroma of roast TAFF delegates wafting throughout the house.”

“Well, I suppose it’d give an entirely new meaning to the concept of joint candidacy,” said Walter without taking his eyes off the newspaper. And we all went outside to ritualistically bang our heads on the pavement, five times facing east and three pointing north, as prescribed by venerable

and hallowed Irish fannish tradition.

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5. Walt Willis on *The Enchanted Duplicator*: “Writing it was like reading it, only slower.”

Flash Point #8, February 1986

Aspects & Inclinations

Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden

"Tell all the truth – but tell it Slant" – Emily Dickinson

One.

"Yours is the right to the action for its own sake; the fruits of the action are not yours," as the *Bhaghavad-Gita* says – by which Krishna doubtless meant that it's all very well to invent fannish myths to play around with, but you can't anticipate the uses to which they'll be put.

Oddly enough, this very point came up late one night at the 1985 Eastercon as we sat around a table decorated with the exuberantly drunk Langford and Harris, and tried to explain Swedish fandom to Walter A. Willis. Then we had to explain it all over again, several days later in Donaghadee, because Walter wanted to make sure we'd actually said what he remembered us saying.

"They take their fanhistory very seriously – " Patrick began...

"– or rather, other people's fanhistory," Teresa amended...

"– they worship the collected works of John Berry, which they all seem to have memorized –"

"– they have ghoodminton tournaments on their convention programs –"

"– they actually *wear* propeller beanies, actually and truly –"

"– their fanzines are so full of fanspeak you almost can't read them; every other word has the intrusive fannish 'h', like in 'bheer' –"

"– and those are the ones supposedly in English –"

"– the fanzines in Swedish are worse, you almost *can* make sense of them, seeing how every third word is something like 'Lhord Roscoe' or 'mimeografensvals' –"

"– there was one illustrated heading on an article – looked like it was drawn on-stencil with a paper clip – showing two Hugo-shaped rockets shooting at each other, and one of them was labelled 'Fandom' and the other 'Monden' –"

" – as though you fifties fans really *were* gods to them, no kidding around – I can't pick up any whiff of humour or irony in it at all. They

have long-winded arguments about the precise and specific attributes of correct fannishness, sounding for all the world like they absolutely mean every bit of it –"

"– by now I imagine they know the internal layout of Oblique House better than *you* do."

Walter listened with widening eyes, leaning far forward. When we'd finished falling over the ends of each others' sentences he sat back to scratch his head, and let out a deep breath. "My God," he said. "What. Have. We. Done.... I think that's the appropriate kind of response, don't you?"

We've wondered. They do it in a foreign language; maybe that's all it takes to shift the entire apparatus of myth-making from deliberate silliness into apparent absurdity. Who knows? In translation anyone's fanwriting might come out weirdly askew, like the protocols of some crackpot religion. Perhaps Sverifandom is into some kind of high art: Son of Dada. And on the other hand, as Terry Carr once solemnly explained to Teresa, you might as well laugh. The world is a very funny place, whether or not the humour you find it is fair to its subjects....

"The Swedes may not be doing that any more," Teresa pointed out. "We read all that stuff back around 1981, and most of it was the work of Anders Bellis and Ahrvid Engholm."

"What are they up to now?" Walter asked, very bravely we thought.

"I hear they've all bought copies of *Fanzines in Theory and Practice* and are busy reading up on it."

Two.

Meanwhile, back in Donaghadee, Walter and Madeleine Willis are kind, gentle, funny people who live in realtime and show no signs of imminent apotheosis. It would be a discourtesy and a stupid one to boot, we thought, to obsess on fannish mythology to the exclusion of enjoying their actual company during our visit. Still there were *Hyphen*-ghosts all over the house: a twenty-cup capacity teapot, Walter's lovingly preserved old notebook from his first visit to the States, out of which he wrote *The Harp Stateside* (in the middle of one page, a single sentence: "I hope the hotel doesn't sue"); Madeleine's recipe for the mysterious "coffee kisses" that turn out to be a sort of sandwich cookie. Walter's offhanded innocence when he said he hoped the untried electric blanket in the guest room wouldn't malfunction and cook us overnight *should* have been familiar

enough to tip us off. This thought occurred to us only after he'd added, "It'd give a whole new meaning to the concept of 'joint candidacy'...."

"Aaaargh," replied Patrick in his usual sprightly manner. Or, as Teresa later said with her mouth, "It is an act of virtue to treat one's fannish elders with respectful sobriety. You give them lots more straight lines that way."

Should it have been obvious that on the nightstand in the guest room there'd be a copy of *The Enchanted Duplicator* with "Gideon" written on the cover, or that the postcard view out the window would be of a startlingly familiar lighthouse? And next, Walter's assuring us that a little-known feature of fabulous fannish memory is its tendency to run counter to time, as witness the lighthouse: when ATom started drawing the things on the back covers of Hyphen, Walter and Madeleine hadn't yet moved to Donaghadee. Believe and be saved. Newtownards Road is a major arterial leading into Belfast; the former Oblique House is a big brick row-house in a street full of same. You wouldn't notice it on your own. Our route one day taking us past this historical site, we duly appreciate it while Madeleine tells us a long funny story about the travails of selling the house, Walter adding as we drive away that when the woman who finally bought the place moved in she installed a huge harp in the front room where you could see it quite clearly through the window.

Earlier, just in off our flight, we'd marveled at the suburban tidiness of the airport, with its modern-looking branches of "Ulsterbank" and "Ulsterbus". It wasn't what we had imagined while being frisked three separate times back in Manchester (Teresa nervously joking that whatever it was they were looking for, she was glad there wouldn't be one of it on our flight) and nothing at all like the alternate-world mythic dystopian Northern Ireland we'd read about in the *New York Times*. Driving out along the airport access road Walter told us we'd just passed our last checkpoint. As we rounded a curve we saw a small car stopped dead in the middle of the oncoming lane, with a middle-aged couple sitting frozen in the front seat. Soldiers in fatigues conversed with them through the windows on either side; another soldier crouched in the road in front of them, levelling a bazooka at their windshield. Walter didn't even blink, just drove on, conversing amiably. We swallowed hard, remembering Shelby Vick's giant cockroach and the politeness of not screaming hysterically at things your host affects not to notice. Besides, do we break pace for people sleeping in doorways in freezing weather, or ranting schizophrenics in the subways? Travel reminds you of what you take for granted.

Three.

On examination our notebooks turn up the usual collection of unhelpful random jottings, too many of which go in for botany. We were disconcerted by Northern Ireland's aggressive vegetation, all of it a deep dayglo green and sprouting in every available thimbleful of soil. One large public building had its bas-relief frieze covered in wire mesh to prevent the planting of bombs, and between pigeons and windblown dust the whole pediment was coming up in flowers. (A sign on the highway: "Heavy Plant Crossing", which we found alarmingly suggestive.) Surprised, we tried to explain to Walter that those tall decorative plants in Donaghadee's front yards were yucca, a very long way from home and flourishing in entirely the wrong climate.

Fascinating fannish conversation? Of course, but mostly what remains are a few potsherd one-liners: "He said, 'Fuck knows' – which might not be elegant but which lip-reads easily." Or (pertinently?), "It's like the professor of ichthyology who complained that every time he recalled the name of a student, he lost the name of a fish." In fairness to IF's reputation for verbal brilliance, be it noted that we arrived in Belfast in a post-convention fog, with only a few scintilla and change left in our own pockets.

Himself is tall (as ever; nothing new to report there), deliberate, and catches jokes in mid-trajectory. His voice is extraordinarily soft and – a strange thing in a fan – he's in the habit of letting the other person start talking first. (Teresa claims that after all these years, she's forgotten what one does under those circumstances.) The conversations we remember best were slow and broad, and like all good conversations cannot be wholly recapitulated. On one discussion we discussed *The Enchanted Duplicator* and the durability of its insights, how we keep returning to it as one of the touchstones of our fannish universe. Walter said that co-writing it with Bob Shaw was one of those strange infrequent experiences where the words fall straight off your fingers and onto the page – "Writing it was like reading it, only slower." Onwards to his observation that "no egoboo is ever wasted"; that everything you put into fandom returns to you eventually, if sometimes belatedly and by circuitous means. We agree, and compare notes, offering in trade our pleasure at getting writing-egoboo from Walter or layout-egoboo from Redd Boggs after years of lovingly pillaging their work; jointly we ratify the proposition that it's never too late for a letter of comment. And Walter talked quietly about a dream he had had in the wake of George Charters's snowed-in and underattended

funeral: of walking sadly down a Bangor street near George's home, and coming upon an open door to a large and brilliantly lit room where all the friends whose lives George Charters had touched were having a party to celebrate their good fortune in having known him: a true memorial. And when he awoke he realized, why yes, that's the way it was.

... And more, and further, matters little and big, much of it exchanged en route on various excursions. Which is not to say you should have been there (there wouldn't have been room in the car), only that we wish we'd been there longer.

A digression, on digressiveness: Once we got back to London we compared notes with Greg Pickersgill. We'd watched him Saturday afternoon at the Eastercon working his courage up – a process involving an hour spent bouncing up and down in place while muttering "Hup. Hup hup hup" under his breath – before going up and introducing himself to Walter by saying, "What can you say to someone who changed your life?" (Which is true. It were that half-run of old *Hyphen*s Greg found in his neohood as done it to him. But as Walter later commented, "What can you say to someone who comes up to you and says, 'What can you say to someone who...'?") Of the long conversation that followed Greg would only say that it comprehended many points and could not be summarized. The sole fragment we have from it, beyond the introductions, is as inscrutable as anything in our notebooks: God knows how, but they wandered into a discussion of what it's like periodically to realize, with a start, that you're married to a Very Short Woman.

So focus this uneasy stereopticon on the *true* Secret Master of IF. Madeleine is short, quick and sharp-witted, possessed of fiercely blue eyes and an overwhelming conviction that her visitors are perpetually in danger of death by starvation (they aren't). Though – as she explained while unloading a succession of goodies from her deepfreeze – she's switched over to storeboughten baked goods in order to have more time for golfing; and indeed, there's a framed photograph in the upstairs hallway of her being the Heroic Lady Captain of the Donaghadee Golf Club. She followed this with a brief oration in praise of Women's Liberation (Teresa hoping meanwhile that this wasn't prompted by her confessing to a fondness for needlework – a hope rewarded, as it turned out, since Madeleine knits and before we left bestowed upon Teresa a bagful of handy end bits of leftover yarn); conducted a rapid survey of our eating habits and telephoned the Whites to say "It's wonderful, they'll eat anything"; and altogether struck us as the only person we've ever met who's shorter, faster-talking, and more prone to Useful Remarks than the

women in Patrick's family, and she doesn't constantly exhort you to take lots of vitamins the way they do. It may be that she's religious about food instead. The one time we saw her at a loss was when Patrick, in good American fashion, topped his serving of apple tart with cheese. This has mutated in memory into a Walt Kellyesque cartoon in which Madeleine says WOWF!, eyes bugging out, while her hat (she wasn't actually wearing one) flies straight up into the air.

Four.

Linear narrative is the least of what happened, but we *did* actually Do Things in our 48 hours there: driving down through Down, for instance, in a great southerly loop whose furthest point was (how not?) a visit to Scrabo Tower, the original model for the Tower of Trufandom. It sits on an isolated rocky height at the head of Strangford Lough (the lough on first sight shimmering in the sun, the biggest set of mudflats we'd ever seen; the tide was out and the shorebirds were very happy about it). In theory Scrabo was built to honour somebody-or-other last century, but one suspects that sooner or later an excuse would have been found to build a tower there anyway, the site being irresistible.

For the record, *The Enchanted Duplicator* is unreliable on this one point – the way you get to the Tower is by following the signs for Scrabo Country Club. Got that? Okay, you're now a True Fan. (Though when Walter looked around for the country club's parking lot and said he wasn't quite sure – they'd changed things since he was last there – and Madeleine replied, "Don't worry. I think I know the way," we found ourselves simultaneously biting our tongues to avoid quoting in unison, "If you are a True Fan, you will know the way." We have some self-restraint). Madeleine struck out through the underbrush at the edge of the parking lot and, sure enough, turned up what was clearly the path to the tower.

Halfway up the hill we came upon the Scrabo Golf Course, which we stared at quite stupidly while bracing ourselves against a wind off the lough that would have served to lift a kite braced with two-by-fours. "My God," Teresa said, almost shouting over the roar in her ears, "do people – actually – golf – up – here?"

"Oh, yes," Madeleine said imperturbably. "It's a good day when we can beat the Scrabo golfers."

The tower itself is tall and square, built of rough brown stone blocks, and pretty much looks like everybody's idea of what a generic tower

should be, which is a virtue in allegorical objects. That aside, the view alone is worth the trip. We watched the Mountains of Mourne do a fan-dance with the assistance of some erratic cloud-cover, and Walter pointed out the site of the famous battle wherein the Men of Ulster were temporarily felled by the traditional Weakness of the Men of Ulster, an odd knack they had for suddenly falling asleep. Teresa fell over in their memory.

Another day we drove from Donaghadee up to Portstewart, to have tea with the Whites, give James his Doc Weir Award, and commit a silly oneshot on the impressive new White word processor by way of christening it. The official presentation of the Doc Weir Award was thorough, taking place six times so that James could be photographed trying to Look Naughty with Teresa while she presented the cup and certificate. Our own snapshots reveal that neither party has the least talent for visible wickedness; the photo of James demonstrating Psneeronics is much more striking. Meanwhile Peggy White laid out lavish quantities of food and conversation, including a lively reenactment of the time she got stuck on a program item debating male vs. female superiority. At a loss for points of feminist theory to argue, she improvised by marching over to a short member of the opposing team (she's not far shy of six feet), putting her hand on the top of his head, and announcing, "I, for one, object to being referred to as The Little Woman!" To her great relief the point carried the day, which she thought was a great piece of luck but which we viewed as Ideologically Sound.

Five.

Driving about with Walter and Madeleine we saw a hallucinogenic great lot of Ireland on the move and selected portions of it standing more or less still, and God knows the whole visit was buried in conversation: histories general and personal and fannish, notes and queries, stray bits of gossip, and what's that thing over there? As a result orderly recollection here loses out completely, though it's been behind on the scoreboard all along. From the many delusions available we cherished the one that seemed most useful at the time: that James Joyce was a mimetic realist, trying only to describe the place accurately. Not true, impossible in fact, but...

Ireland itself, the physical geography, is misrepresented in all those lush travel posters. They don't do it justice: they merely reproduce what's capable of being photographed, the way a snapshot of a person with

changeable facial expressions catches an arbitrary fractional sequence in mid-transformation. Pictures make it look as though the country stands still (it doesn't, ever); as though the Mountains of Mourne spend whole afternoons in sunlight, or half-seen through fog, or with cloud-shadows running over their slopes, when in truth they can do all of those things inside of five minutes and then disappear altogether for the next three hours. We drove through Antrim, up and down large rolling hills which are doubtless known as mountains locally: sun and shadow, fog and clarity, mists that re-texture the view depending on whether they're seen from a distance or up close, from inside their boundaries (a cool blue-gray, with only the nearest trees achieving full probability as we passed) or from the outside (with the sun at our backs the fog briefly turned bright gold: a beautiful thing). A lot of variety's gotten out of little weather and less mileage. Likewise the soil itself, here plentiful (farms, villages, tidy dense cultivation), suddenly sparse (forests, uplands, sheep strange to eyes used to the cotton-ball variety – these appeared to have body-beards, long straight thatches of wool that looked to be a foot deep).

There are ruins everywhere. "Very convenient, this," said Teresa as we drove to Greyabbey en route to Scrabo. "At home I've travelled hundreds of miles to see ruins, but here they're on practically every corner, like grocery stores." But back in Arizona ruins sit inside a single frame (old, Indian: Hohokam, Anasazi), and even in Reading where we'd visited the Langfords the ruins were of the finite species. (The Langford taxonomy: old bits, ecclesiastical bits, mediaeval bits, Roman bits, and Huntley & Palmer biscuit tins.) Irish ruins are a constant quick-change half-seen slide show illustrating the whole (maybe?) of Irish history, recent industrial ruins in Belfast, sad tiny roofless stone cottages set in minuscule stone-wall-bordered plots of land (and in the midst of this pleasant day a whisper in your ear says "potato blight, intensive cultivation, famine, three million dead," while up ahead in the distance you can see a steep-sided mesa with planted fields extending up its sides as far as they can go, at an impossibly steep angle). The grand old Gothic ruin of Greyabbey, lost in God-knows-but-we-forget-which set of troubles. Dunluce Castle, stacked up and tumbling down at the northernmost coast of Antrim, looking down from cliffs far higher than its walls to where the sea chews away at the land that it sits on so that every so often another chunk of castle collapses into the sea.

Dunluce is hard to see. You have to squint past all the pictures in your head – old engravings, the covers of innumerable Gothic novels – trying to focus on the thing itself; a crumbling castle on the shores of a wild sea,

vast lost antiquity and ruins that haven't seen the end of their own ruination. It is precisely and technically the Romantic Sublime, but then the light shifts again and Dunluce is its tangible prosaic self as well, a large wet pile of stones in a fenced-off field next to a parking lot. Meanwhile you're most unromantically lying flat on your stomach with your toes dug into the turf, trying to photograph the Antrim cliffs with your head hanging over the edge, and hoping not to tumble over yourself to become one with the castle's kitchens in the surf below. Meanwhile behind you Madeleine is suggesting that maybe we should all get back into the car? – because (1) we're already behind schedule for tea with the Whites, and (2) it's *cold* out here. Older than Dunluce, there are occasional reminders that this was once St. Patrick's own neighborhood, and there are standing stones not *quite* as old as the hills that have seen all the rest come and go in succession. Then you drive over another hill and you're in a small unlovely town. On one wall are lines of graffiti, in utterly modern spray paint just like the subways of New York, except that these say WILLIAM OF ORANGE, 1689, NO SURRENDER, and FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY.

Stacks of sliding transparencies: change and re-combination, made even more indeterminate (improbable?) by the added layers of fannish myth. A sense of certainty grows on us, that our understanding is absolutely imperfect. Of course everybody's is, all the time; but like God, the abstract idea and direct personal experience of it are two different things.

On the long midnight drive back from Portstewart we asked Walter and Madeleine various questions about Ireland's more recent Troubles. We knew more coming out than we did going in, and got to hear Madeleine's descriptions of her work with the peace party, Alliance (when she mentioned a position paper that she'd have to draft in the next few days and Walter observed that he'd probably get roped into the writing too, their ensuing discussion sounded oddly familiar), but on the whole Irish politics is probably best filed with Basque, ballet and quantum physics, subjects we cannot hope to master at our advanced age. No matter. There are other continua to navigate. We talked fandom back and forth, finally (perhaps) getting the measure of each other's accents; listening to them on their own time, their lives and journeys, trying to convey in turn what it's like in our own noisy, crowed fannish universe; binding up time in good fashion, all things coming together in imagination and the word. And it may have been that we were all very well pleased.

For sure, the next day we were sorry to leave.

1986: Greg Pickersgill

Greg Pickersgill attended ConFederation in Atlanta, Georgia, the 1986 Worldcon. The rival candidates were Judith Hanna and Simon Ounsley. It was Greg Pickersgill's avowed plan that his TAFF report should incorporate accounts of his visit by third parties, and such material is duly collected here.

Platform

Sometimes I'm not Boring. Occasionally I'm Wonderful. Anyway, you either know who I am and what I've done, or you don't, and don't care. Whatever, since meeting fandom in 1967 I've done a bit of everything, I was even a fanwriter, but now I just, you know, *perform*. So what. I like Guinness, Dos Equis, *Performance*, Anne Warren, Pizza, and Neat Stuff, and I can't stand bullshit about pretension and fandom fans. I have met several Americans and became very attached to them. I will go looking for a good time and meaningful conversations. 1986, Big Fun and No Sellout.

Nominators: Mike Glicksohn, Arthur ("Atom") Thomson, Rich Coad, Avedon Carol, and Linda Pickersgill.

Fragments

from *Letters from Prison*
Ted White

The ConFederation was a mixed experience for me. The Marriott Marquis is an incredible Worldcon hotel – it has a 42-story-tall atrium that looks, from almost any angle, like the actual embodiment of a 1939 Frank R. Paul cover painting, the design elegant beyond any I've seen before. And it was great to see Greg Pickersgill enjoying himself with a sort of belligerent bemusement at an American convention.

Letter #2, 11 September 1986

Letter #14 records that "Today Dan Steffan brought Greg Pickersgill to visit me here." Alas, the prison's "new visitation area" made communication almost impossible: Ted and Greg had to catch up with a phone call next day:

I called the Steffans this morning at about 11:30, and talked with Dan and Greg for more than an hour. It was all the visit had not been. Greg and I compared opinions of the people we knew, discussed how we each feel about writing (he feels about fan writing not unlike the way I feel about pro writing – that once you reach the peak of your abilities, your ambition to write better works against you, making you impatient with the level of what you're writing and making the task of writing grim work, and no fun at all), and agreed that it was a bloody shame that it wasn't easier and cheaper to commute between the US and the U.K. "I definitely want to come back again." I told him how much I enjoy driving cross-country and really seeing the West. "Linda wanted to do that," Greg said. I urged him to plan for it for a future trip here. And we talked about Brighton. "I'm looking forward to the Worldcon," I said. "This time I'll have a much more fannish convention." "The whole situation has changed completely since 1979," Greg said. We agreed the current state of rapprochement between the fandoms of our countries was a marked improvement, both for us each, personally, and for fandom in general. It was an excellent conversation, and one I'm glad we were able to have, away from the pressures of the Worldcon and in a more relaxed mood.

Letter #14, 16 October 1986

Synopsis
Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden

GREG PICKERSGILL'S TAFF VISIT is of course Greg's to write up; far be it from us to steal his thunder. However, the bare facts: Greg was in North America for just under two months, during which time he attended two conventions, visited fan centers in New York, the Bay Area, Seattle, Madison, Toronto, and Washington DC; crossed the continent by both air and rail; saw diverse Americana including an aircraft carrier, a mass-market publisher's office, and a jail (as an outside observer, we hasten to add); pronounced the quality of all the small-brewery beers he was plied with "damned good"; partied in all three Worldcon bidding zones, met all five candidates in this year's race, and generally seemed to have an interesting time aside from the random outbreaks of panic and terror which (as we ourselves observed) go with the territory. Watch for his report, now in progress. To all those who hosted Greg in their homes or otherwise contributed to his trip, and particularly to the Worldcon committee for their many considerate acts, TAFF's thanks. Greg travelled farther and stayed longer than any TAFF winner since Arthur Thomson in 1964; that's a lot of stress, and we were impressed by his performance and stamina. "Was it worth it?" we asked. "Bloody hell," was his response, followed by a long silence. Then: "Yes. Definitely. Definitely yes."

TAFFluvia #8, November 1986

TAFFman at ConFederation

Linda Blanchard

I count myself as a friend to Greg though I've only known him half a year. My husband, Dave Bridges, knows him far better that I do, and they're reasonably kindly disposed towards each other. We sheltered at Greg and Linda's flat outside of London several times during the month of February, and the Pickersgills helped us through our battles with U.S. Immigration, in fact going far beyond the usual calls of friendship to see that Dave and I were able to be together for good. Greg even stood up for us at our registry office wedding in Sheffield. In addition to my visit to Britain, we've just spent some time with Greg at ConFederation. I was pleased to find that my reaction to seeing Greg again was gladness; that I'd missed his outspoken curmudgeonliness. This has been a position statement.

I first got to see Greg in official action as TAFF delegate at the first of two TAFF auctions, late Friday evening, where he harassed the very small crowd of dedicated fen into paying the most they would pay for a fanzine. Frank Lunney paid $70 for a complete set of *Stop Breaking Down*, and then, as throughout the auction, Greg's voice carried incredulity. Whether it was at the high prices fans paid, or the low, their ignorance of certain fanwriters, or their value of the same, Greg seemed totally amazed by it all.

Early Sunday afternoon, Ted set up to interview Greg as the TAFF candidate, and looking at the only quarter filled, large room, suggested that he could skip the initial questions he had planned on to orient those who didn't know Greg, and could go straight to the heavy stuff.

To the question of how, after years of speaking out against TAFF and belittling American fandom, he'd decided to run for TAFF and come over, Greg answered that he'd finally met some Americans "who weren't as dimwitted as we'd thought. You could actually hold a conversation with them." There had been some good Americans over in recent years, like Stu Shiffman, but they were rather quiet.

"And you didn't notice that retiring violet, Avedon Carol, right?" Ted laughed.

"No actually," Greg said, straight faced, "since she spent most of her time humping Rob Hansen."

It was the visit from the Nielsen Haydens that knocked him silly. Suddenly there were these two quite interesting fans who just dropped in seeming to know about everything, and partying with the rest of them and Pickersgill hadn't known them at all. Later, at home, he hauled out all the NH fanzines he'd received over the years and read them for the first time. About new fanzines received in the mail, he confessed, "I don't actually read the bloody things. I only read what I know will be good, and by people I know."

Prior to this he'd had little contact with American fandom. At Brighton's Worldcon in 1979 the two fandoms, British and American, hardly knew each other. Ted and the other fans present who attended Seacon agreed that at the time they didn't know which fans would be worth looking up. Greg also claimed he came to Noreascon in 1980 purely by happenstance, and he had a miserable time. (Later, David pointed out to me that this was Greg's introduction to American conventions and fandom and that anyone coming to a huge Worldcon without established contacts stood a good chance of having no fun at all. Nine tenths of the people at such cons are complete nerds and the best tenth is off partying behind closed doors at an American convention.)

In fact, Pickersgill said, "When I took charge of British fandom, as everyone knows I did, we created a situation that was antithetic to American fandom." He'd made an effort to intentionally cut British fandom off from its mother fandom so that they'd "stop hanging on American coattails" and create an interesting and self-sufficient fandom of their own, based on British standards instead of American. That accomplished, Greg feels the two fandoms can (and should) now have contact which will bring aspects of value to each without either being overwhelmed.

Still, American fandom is strange to Greg and he admitted he still felt a little lost. It's all so damned foreign (and myself having been over to Britain for Mexicon, I can testify that the two fandoms do have completely different approaches, so that I could be vastly amused when Greg came to sit with Dave and I while we were staffing the fan lounge; shoving hands into icy buckets of water to retrieve cold cans of pop, running about restocking the buckets with cans to ice down; Greg croggled over the energy we were expending on giving away free pop to strangers. It is rather weird from a British perspective). You have to realize, Greg said, "We don't know what makes you laugh."

The bar is the centre of British conventions. It's a different environment, more like a lounge or a lobby with a cash bar where people

hang around and chat. There aren't the closed room parties, but then, Britain doesn't have the monster cons that America does; it doesn't have as large a number of fans, convention or otherwise; and most fans in Britain are aware of traditional fanzines and their role in fandom. Too, as Greg pointed out, the British fans have learned from American cons: "We'll take pains to keep British cons from going the way American cons have – Conspiracy will be focused on literacy." There isn't any split between fannish and sercon in Britain, Greg said. The fans who sit and talk lit'rature on panels during the day are out making fools of themselves with the rest of us afterwards, and writing it all up later.

"Why are British fanzines so well written?" a voice from the audience asked. Greg suggested that this was a matter of better education. He feels that the British people are more culturally oriented to begin with, and the educational system does a better job than its American counterpart. On the other hand, he said, though we have a higher proportion of stupid people and illiterates at our American conventions, our smart people are smarter than theirs, he felt. Some of our fans stun him with their capacity for intelligent conversation and their understanding of events fannish and otherwise. British fandom has "a high level of mediocrity" compared to American fandom.

Teresa asked why Greg, Michael Ashley and Joseph Nicholas all had the same reputation for being abrasive. "Most of Ashley's abrasiveness is based on alienation," Greg said, and therefore no one takes him very seriously, and Nicholas tends to enjoy being a badass for its own sake. Greg's reputed abrasiveness, though, is based on his straightforward criticism.

"A fanzine has to be intrinsically interesting for me to want to read it," he said. "It has to be able to compete with everything else for my attention." There are so many good things to do in this life, like messing with the cats, and lying on the floor staring at the ceiling. If fanzines are badly written it's a waste of time to read them, and Greg's not going to bother.

Ted suggested that Greg got a bad rap as being a KTF critic when really, Greg "offered options, and wondered why a fanzine wasn't being done another way."

British fanzines not only need to compete with life to be read (actually all fanzines do) but they have to compete to be written. Great Britain, for all its density and history, is a small country and fans there can easily see each other several times a year, and in centres like London, monthly or more. "In Britain," Greg said, "you can talk out an idea," and

never bother to publish at all. This high ratio of social interaction is also what gives British fanzines a special obscurity to some American readers, since many of the subtle jokes derive from things that happened at fannish gatherings.

Gary Farber asked Greg what he planned to take over now that he'd set straight British fanzines and conventions. (A voice from the back of the room suggested America.) Why not go pro?

"I'm too thick to write professionally," Greg claimed.

"You're not," Teresa protested. "I've seen all the books on your shelf."

"All right. I'm not stupid," Greg amended, and chuckled, "I'm not really thick, but I'm shallow."

At the end of the hour Greg was asked to quickly summarize British fans. A few of these brief comments are: John Jarrold – clown; Dave Langford – deaf person; Owen Whiteoak – living in the 60s; Alan Dorey – lost in time; Judith Hanna – Australian; Don West – shy; Leroy Kettle – Who?

When asked about his response to comments about his candidacy in "two recent fanzines" Greg dismissed them as "so much grandstanding at the last minute." If they had something to say against him running they'd have been smarter to bring it up before he won the race doing so at the last moment seemed obviously aimed at making his trip miserable (however since everyone saw through the ploy, it was having virtually no effect). He also pointed out that the fans who'd tried this tack were held in utter contempt in the British Isles anyway. "They ought to stop now before their names are completely forgotten, while their names are only met with laughter."

You're the only person I know who abuses yourself as much as I do.

The interlineation above came early one morning when several fans were keeping Dave and I company in the fan lounge. Mike Glicksohn was telling Greg why he liked him. They were (by the way) talking about beer, the drinking of, and I kept trying to get Greg's attention long enough to tell him that if he'd come visit the Dallas area and stay with us, we'd feed him room temperature Guinness (the local health food store has a fantastic stock of foreign beer, etc.) and he could recuperate a bit if he liked by lying on our floor and staring at our ceiling.

Scattershot #3, September 1986

TAFFman in Toronto

Mike Glicksohn

As one of Greg Pickersgill's TAFF nominators I felt I had a personal stake in his TAFF candidacy. A very small but quite vocal minority of American fans was questioning Greg's suitability as a TAFF delegate based on i) his long-standing dissatisfaction with how TAFF was working, and ii) his much-publicized reputation for anti-social behaviour, occasionally verging on the manic-depressive. It being the nature of fanzine fandom to inscribe its passing thoughts in moderately permanent form, the anti-Pickersgill faction had considerable evidence that appeared to give superficial credence to their concerns. Since I had willingly and voluntarily tied my wagon to Greg's star I thought it behooved me to try and balance the scales somewhat.

And that's what I did, based on my personal knowledge of Greg (none of his critics had ever met him) along with my awareness of the changing factors in his life that had led him to eschew his previous opinions. I doubt I changed anybody's mind but at least I did my best so I sat back, along with those who were hoping to see the biggest TAFF cock-up ever, to await the results of my enthusiastic support of Gregory Pickersgill, 1986 TAFF delegate.

I had no qualms whatsoever concerning Greg's merit as a candidate. The man's record spoke for itself regardless of his thoughts on TAFF in years gone by. But. I admit I was a touch worried by his tendency to fall into a blue funk, become abusive, lock himself in his room, then vanish without fulfilling his fannish commitments. (Characteristics not exactly unknown amongst fan fund winners but hardly the things the voters actually look for.) When I was told by his detractors that Greg would never finish a TAFF report, I defended his integrity vehemently... and wondered whether or not I'd ever have to eat my words.

And Greg showed up at the Atlanta worldcon, was abundantly social, highly visible in those areas a TAFF delegate was likely to be looked for, comported himself with style and wit and enthusiasm, handled his "official" role as TAFF winner with a candour and humour I admired, and generally seemed to have a good time. Oh yeah, he got into one personality conflict that generated some rather harsh exchanges which

were settled *in situ* and later resolved fully, but on the whole he functioned more than adequately as a representative/ambassador of British fandom. As TAFF winner Greg had cleared his first – and most significant – hurdle better than many and as well as most.

Worldcons being what they are nowadays, Greg and I touched base frequently but fleetingly. We *did* contrive to double-handedly split a bottle of Pickersgill provided(!), Pickersgill-purchased(!!) Welsh vodka (!!!) with the unlikely name of "Taff" (!!!!) at the Fan Fund Auction but for some reason the incident, while longer than most of our meetings, is less clear in my memory than it ought to be. Nevertheless, all I saw and everything I heard left me with the impression that Greg had Done Good. I'd expected nothing less.

At some time during the three-ring Atlanta circus I made the obligatory offer to Greg of accommodation should he find himself in the Toronto area. (I invariably invite TAFF/DUFF winners to drop by if/when they're in the neighbourhood and the inevitable reply is a polite "Thanks, I may take you up on that" but prior to that year only one fan fund winner had actually made use of the invitation.) Greg surprised me greatly by indicating he was seriously considering a visit to Canada/Toronto and he pocketed my card + phone number, And we were both swept our separate ways in the fannish maelstrom and Atlanta's worldcon eventually wound to a close. (But that's six thousand other stories.)

As September slipped by and I re-immersed myself in the Real World with no word from Greg I merely thought fanhistory was repeating itself and he'd had either a change of heart or a change of plans. It turned out I'd simply failed to grasp the extended time-line the 1986 TAFF trip was occupying. On September 25th, Greg called to say he'd be arriving in Toronto by train on Thursday, October 2nd. Somewhat surprised that he was still around, I still had the presence of mind to warn him that Doris and I were committed to attending a small regional convention in Niagara Falls, New York over the three days following his arrival. If he wanted to came along and *then* see Toronto... And thus was fannish history set in motion.

So it came to pass that I sat in the station bar waiting for Greg's Amtrak-induced lack of punctuality to elapse and eventually he arrived and we sat in the station bar helping his Amtrak-induced travel fatigue to dissipate, A little later on, after depositing his luggage in his room in the only "dry" zone in all of Southern Ontario, we walked across the border (all of five blocks) to the nearest licensed establishment and quaffed a few pints while talking about how wonderful North America was (or at least

Wisconsin, anyway) and what it was like to be a TAFF delegate (a topic I thought might be of potential interest) and matters of similar ilk. To say that Greg was exuberant would be to downplay his obvious euphoria. I just sipped my beer and felt glad the trip was going so well for him.

The next afternoon Doris, Greg and I drove off to Niagara Falls to attend CONTRADICTION 6, a small but friendly regional with Bill Bowers and George R.R. Martin as honoured guests. Greg was very enthusiastic about seeing an American non-worldcon and on the trip down (a mere quick-step of two hours, due mostly to the unusually heavy traffic) he bubbled over with delight at the mere idea of being in Canada. When not waxing eloquent over the wonders of Wisconsin he'd gaze out the window wearing an enormous grin and occasionally announce, "Christ, I'm actually in fucking *Canada*!" He even went so far as to state that it was recognizably different from our smaller southern neighbour he'd recently criss-crossed. Naturally this prompted me to hope out loud that he was writing all this down for his trip report which was probably where I got talked into doing at least a part of it for him. So it was we delivered TAFF winner Pickersgill into the maw of midwestern fandom, little knowing what reactions would result.

Toronto being closer to Niagara Falls than most other centres, we'd arrived before most of the out-town attendees and since the interested locals were all busy setting up the con things were a little slow at first. We went for fast-but-not-bad food and proved to Greg that if you've seen one, you've seen the Mall. Then we returned to the con hotel to greet arriving friends.

I'd been really looking forward to this particular convention even though in the past it hadn't been one of my favourites because fifteen or so of my favourite people in fandom were going to be there. Consequently I made a special effort to introduce Greg to my special friends hoping he'd hit it off with those I'd actually come down to spend my weekend with. In part, it worked. But in part it backfired, largely because I hadn't really thought about some of the differences between "my" fandom and the fandom Greg was familiar with. None of that came out until several days later, though, and in the meantime, inadvertently, the seeds were sown.

Still, on that first night, Greg seemed to enjoy himself and act as the TAFF delegate should. Unlike small British conventions where almost everyone knows and likes almost everyone else *((! ed))*, even a small US con seems to feature at most 25% people you actively would like to speed time with and naturally it takes time for them to gather. As Greg was or more less trusting my judgement in these matters the first couple of hours

on Friday night were quite slow. This being a North American convention there was no central bar to hang around in and the con suite was limited to draft American beer, a liquid Greg appeared to believe had bypassed the to-be-ingested stage and gone straight to the ready-for-elimination stage, so Greg eventually wandered off, leaving a small coterie of fannish fans on the mezzanine chatting about things of almost international interest. He soon reappeared with a bottle of Southern Comfort for himself and a bottle of American whiskey for me and we got merrily tipsy together while talking of sundry fannish matters such as our shared enthusiasm for certain members of the Algonquin round table. After agreeing to meet Greg for some sightseeing the next day I wandered off to start a poker game, in the belief that Greg was more than capable of fending for himself and might actually prefer a little free time to be himself rather than The Incredibly Famous TAFF Winning Pickersgill.

I broke even on the night. You'll have to ask Greg how he did.

Saturday was definitely a day of contrasts. Physically, it was a miserable excuse for a day: cold, gray, soggy and completely unappealing. Undaunted, though, Greg and I walked the few blocks from the con hotel to the wonders of The Falls. We walked across the international border separating Canada and the US (a first for me) and wandered along the Canadian side of the Niagara Gorge to get the best view of the famous falls. We were both totally drenched by the inclement weather (as opposed to the normal dampening that results from the ever-present Niagara Falls-out) and yet it was a magical time. I love the Falls, no matter how often I see them, and Greg was like a small child let loose in Wonderland. He took roll after roll of pictures and it was easy to see the Sense of Wonder radiating from him. At one point, as we stood there dripping wet watching the awesome power of the Niagara River cascading over the precipice of the Horseshoe Falls, Greg admitted that while he'd always thought he'd visit America the idea of standing ten feet away from the tumultuous lip of Niagara Falls was totally mind-boggling to him. I thought of how I'd felt a year earlier while standing in the middle of the Clifton Suspension Bridge and knew a bit of what he was feeling.

Eventually we wandered back to America, paid another dime to cross the world's longest undefended border, and on the way back to the hotel we each picked up another bottle of booze to help keep the cold and the damp at bay. That may well have been somewhat of a mistake....

Later that night Doris and I held the first room party we've ever thrown in six years of attending conventions together. We'd brought in some excellent Canadian beer (some of my best friends are American but

one wouldn't want to drink like them), an entire side of superb lox with cream cheese and cocktail bread, and we'd invited the 25% of the convention we wanted to spend our time with. Well, that's probably an exaggeration. We invited the 8% of the convention we *really* wanted to spend our time with. The 8% we'd gone to the convention for in the first place. In that room were twenty people we really care about and whose friendship we value and quite naturally Greg was one of them. If you're trying to show a visitor why you enjoy going to conventions it makes sense to gather as many of the reasons in one place at one time as possible. And all in all it seemed like a pretty good party: lots of good food, plenty of good drink, and a concentration of Damn Fine Folk, It also turned out to be where The Pickersgill Incident took place.

The bare bones of it are thus; a somewhat drunk Greg Pickersgill got into an argument with a somewhat less drunk George Martin about TAFF. (Not unsurprisingly, the majority of conversations Greg got into had to do with TAFF, or at least started out having to do with TAFF.) After several minutes of increasingly heated exchange, Greg called George an arsehole, whereupon George called Greg an asshole and what had been a damn good party ground to a halt watching two grown men making moderate fools of themselves. As host and as the only person present who knew both combatants I stepped in and tried to act as moderator, an action that was earn me Greg's bitterly sarcastic disapproval when we later tried to analyze what had taken place. I acted as peacemaker, placated all involved, and closed down my own party so we could all go off and cool down somewhere else.

Later that evening I ended up at the "obligatory midwestern poker game" and Greg actually sat in for two hands. (I've always believed that poker was a much more rewarding spectator sport than dominoes and even more enjoyable to actually play.) For no apparent reason he became enraged after the second hand, hurled the remains of his stake at me across the table and stormed out of the room. I spent the rest of the night winning other people's money and trying to explain my friend Gregory to a baffled and concerned group of midwestern fannish fans.

The following morning I finally found Greg sitting sullenly alone in the lobby. Angry and upset he just wanted to get the rest of his things from Toronto and return immediately to New York. In order to demonstrate the intensity and sincerity of his feeling he abruptly left his couch, marched through the front door of the hotel and threw up against the side of the building. With that out of the way I once again undertook the role of peacemaker and tried to convince Greg to stick with his original plan of

spending some time visiting Toronto. I knew that was what I wanted my friend to do and I reminded Greg of his initial enthusiasm for seeing the Dominions. My silver-tongued eloquence was so convincing (or else Greg really *did* want to visit Canada) that he agreed to revert to the original plan. He'd return with us and take a few days to explore the city. With that settled, we sat and talked about what had taken place the night before.

After we'd cleared away the alcoholic haze we'd both been looking through, I at least had better idea as *why* The Incident had occurred. (More on that later.) I still thought Greg had been in the wrong but at least I had a better understanding of his motivation and I recognized that he had no intention of apologizing because he didn't see he had anything to apologize for. I told him flat out, though, that he owed the people at the poker game an apology for his behaviour and he agreed completely. (The two incidents and the reasons behind them were largely unconnected although the former probably created the mood which helped the latter develop.) Later that afternoon we located Tim Pruit, in whose room the game had been held, and Greg apologized for acting like a real jerk. Tim had initially been predisposed to like Greg and seemed to appreciate his comments and much of the rest of the afternoon was spent in typically harmonious convention-ending conversation.

When we finally did leave the con, Doris and Greg and I drove over to the American side of the spectacular Horseshoe Falls. Despite being drenched by the omnipresent spray we had a fantastic time. Although I'd visited the Falls dozens of times I'd never before seen the Canadian falls from the American side and even though Greg took all the pictures it would be hard to say who was the most moved and impressed by the awesome natural spectacle we were standing so close to. Eventually, soaked through, we forced ourselves to leave so we could drive along the Niagara Gorge and give Greg the chance to take even more pictures. We stopped for a meal in picturesque Niagara-on-the-Lake and with the tensions of the convention behind us we were able to relax, sip a few beers, and start trying to put things into some sort of perspective.

And that's what Greg and I tried to do over the next four days. The tourist/TAFF winner part of it included Greg wandering all over Toronto, finding odd books he needed, visiting the site of Edwards-Holdstock world, snorfling down all-you-can-eat queen crab legs and finding out whether Canada really *is* observably different from the United States. At the same time I enjoyed explaining baseball to a bewildered Brit, sharing the animated Brunel biography with an appreciative fellow fan, preparing a meal of pork spareribs for the man who'd prepared so many breakfast for

me in London and discovering just how different similar cultures can be. Together we joined Taral and visiting Californian Marc Schirmeister for excellent-yet-very-cheap Chinese food and sipped Pickersgill-approved draft Guinness in a downtown Toronto pseudo-British pub. And over and over again we came back to trying to get a grip on why we couldn't seem to see things – fannish or otherwise – in the same light.

Over the three days Greg spent exploring my city we spent many hours in conversations aimed at trying to figure out just what had happened in Niagara Falls, and just where we stood vis-a-vis each other and fandom. During the course of those talks I learned a great deal. I learned, some things that gave me a better understanding of the interaction between American and British fandom. I learned some things about Greg and some things about Greg and I. If Greg learned anything he'll have to let on himself.

Greg made some telling points. Unfortunately I don't think he realizes that many of his most accurate observations are equally valid when viewed from the other side. For example, Greg was most adamant about insisting that what he referred to as "the home islands" are not an offshoot of the North American continent. Good point. Impossible to argue with. Greg further used this fact to explain why British fans frequently don't *think* about things in the same way American fans do, Another good point. I accepted this and have since used it to explain/defend differences between Them and Us. But what Greg blindly refused to accept was that if this was a valid reason why he shouldn't necessarily agree with a North American it was an equally valid reason why a North American shouldn't necessarily agree with Greg.

To me, this was the crux of Greg's argument with George Martin and his subsequent refusal to apologize to George. Greg explained that in his eyes George's view of TAFF was so totally incorrect that it excused Greg being rude and hostile towards George and removed any need for an apology afterwards. (As it happens, my own view of TAFF is much closer to Greg's than it is to George's but I lack Greg's single-minded conviction that only my own opinion can possibly have any validity.) But whereas Greg insisted that North Americans concede that the British think and feel differently about certain fannish matters, he wasn't willing to accept that the situation could be reciprocated. Having argued eloquently for the right to think and react according to different guidelines from those used by Americans Greg wasn't willing to grant the same rights to his opponents. When it came down to a disagreement between the way an American looked at TAFF and the way Greg thought about it then the American was

just an arsehole and any rudeness or abusiveness was somehow justified. I tried to explain the inconsistencies in his arguments to Greg but I don't think I ever got the point across,

An excellent example of how cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings can be found in one of Greg's observations about the nature of CONTRADICTION itself. I hinted at this earlier when I suggested that I hadn't thought through the differences between my fandom and the fandom that Greg usually inhabits and it illustrates my point about Greg's inability to accept differing viewpoints very well.

I've already stated that I was particularly looking forward to this convention because a goodly number of my best friends were going to be there. Now when this particular group of friends gets together there's a *lot* of physical contact. We hug, we touch, and we kiss. Males and females, males and males, females and females. It's the way we express the deep bonds of friendship that exist between us and if sometimes it leads to something more, okay, but mostly we're demonstrating simple affection. At our room party, freed from even the slight constraints of being among fannish outsiders, I'm sure this aspect of physical closeness was even more apparent than usual.

And not unsurprisingly. Greg misunderstood it completely. He was to tell me later, when we were trying to understand what had happened, that he had gained the impression that all of us spent the majority of the convention fucking like crazed weasels! And since he was a few thousand miles away from Linda and wasn't getting any himself this severely exacerbated his already tense mood and may well have contributed to the eventual confrontation with George Martin. All because of a simple misunderstanding brought about by Greg's inability to comprehend or accept a frame of reference different from his own.

But I digress....

When Greg took me to task for trying to act as mediator in the dispute he accused me of not having any principles, I wasn't willing to take a stand, he said, Somewhat naturally I disagreed. I take stands and I have opinions and I'm rarely wishy-washy. Perhaps, though, the difference between us is that where fandom is concerned (FIJAGDH, after all) I don't see the necessity for holding so fast to principles that rudeness, insults and anti-social behaviour become justified. I can support my beliefs without recourse to invective, abuse or temper tantrums and I quite enjoy doing so. In fact, for over twenty years few things have pleased me more than a healthy intelligent argument about the aspects of fandom I daily immerse myself in. But at the bottom line has to be my belief that it's perfectly

possible for someone to disagree with me totally without being brain-damaged or actively evil, Greg, it seems, is so completely convinced that he holds all opposing perspectives – and those who hold them – in contempt. And that justified, in his own mind, his remarks to George Martin and his subsequent refusal to even contemplate apologizing for them.

And one amusing aspect of the whole matter is that I can understand and forgive Greg far the way he acted but he can't understand or forgive me for what I did. It is to laugh....

Lest I appear to be overly harsh towards. Greg let me state that I learned a lot about the pressures of being a TAFF delegate from him. At least the pressures of Greg Pickersgill being a TAFF delegate. At various times while he was staying with me, Greg told me that if he had any say in the matter he'd lie in the middle of the floor and scream as loud as he possibly could. He also said on more than one occasion that if there were a way to do it he'd take a plane back to London right there and then.

Greg spent longer on his tour of North America than any TAFF winner in decades. And at the best of times the man is not spontaneously gregarious. He voluntarily subjected himself to enormous personal pressure and by and large he handled it very well. Regardless of what may have happened between us personally I believe I supported a Damn Fine TAFF delegate. And if Greg Pickersgill has feet of clay sometimes, who among us doesn't? He did everything he possibly could to live up to the expectations he set for himself as a TAFF winner and I know just how high those expectations were and what it sometimes cost him to try and live up to them. I may not agree with all he did and I don't share many of his attitudes but I respect his personal integrity and I'm proud to have supported and been a part of his TAFF candidacy.

Greg is my friend, I have great respect and admiration for him and I accept his imperfections as my friends accept mine. I regret his apparent belief that he has a lock on Truth and that those who disagree with him must need be morons but I like to think that over a few pints of Guinness sometime I might eventually be able to convince him to lighten up. After all, I do owe him. For his generosity and friendliness when I've visited London and for a career in fandom that has been matched by only a handful of fans. If I sometimes wish he'd learn a few things from me, well, what the hell: things don't always turn out the way we'd like them to.

Contradictions aside, I believe Greg Pickersgill was a good TAFF delegate. His talks really opened my eyes to the differences between American and British fans and someday I'd like to do the same for him.

He may not be perfect but he’s no further away than the rest of us and I plan to keep working on him.

If he’ll let me.

The Caprician #4, May 1989

1988: Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake

Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake attended Nolacon II in New Orleans, Louisiana, the 1988 Worldcon. The rival candidates were Martin Tudor and Dave Wood.

Platform

Since our first fateful meeting over a Blue Lagoon in 1980, we've done just about everything there is to do in fandom, mostly together. We've edited fanzines jointly (*This Never Happens*, our frequently almost-award-winning genzine), with others, and even on our own; helped run conventions as disparate as Mexicon, Conspiracy, and Faircon; and were D. West's very first groupies. We have lots of enthusiasms we're dying to share – comics, feminism and cointreau fondue. No woman from Europe has won TAFF for 25 years, so isn't it time one (or two) did? (*And* neither of us is married (yet).)

Nominators – Dave Langford, Judith Hanna, Simon Ounsley, Jerry Kaufman, David Bridges and Linda Blanchard.

Chapter 1: In the beginning God said let there be flight

(and there was flight, and jet-lag, and little packets of airline peanuts)

Christina Lake

Joint candidacy for TAFF certainly is a liability when the two people in question live at opposite ends of the country. As joint candidates, Lilian and I were quite adamant that we wanted to arrive in America at the same time, and as slightly nervous travellers, we preferred to do so from the same plane. In my southern-centric way, I rather assumed that we would fly from London, but Lilian, after some astute conferences with her travel agents, came up with the irrefutable facts that Glasgow is nearer America than London, and that the plane fares were cheaper (unless we were prepared to fly Kuwait Air, which even at the time didn't seem that good an idea). So, the programme that confronted me as I trundled my brand new extra-large suitcase into Bristol coach station went as follows:

Tuesday 6 hours from Bristol to Glasgow by coach
Wednesday 5½ hours from Prestwick to JFK New York
Thursday 5 hours from JFK to Seattle-Tacoma

Somehow, it was comforting to know that the relatively familiar Bristol-Glasgow coach journey would be the longest stint of the three.

It was also the least interesting. My watch had stopped the day before, and all the shops I tried that morning were completely out of batteries, so I sat there in a timeless void, trying to calculate how well we were doing and how soon I could sensibly eat my sandwiches. At Preston more people joined the coach, and I found myself sitting next to a blonde Australian guy. As anyone who remembers me and Justin Ackroyd at Mexicon 1 will know, I have something of a predilection for Australians. Unfortunately, in this case, the Australian's girl-friend was sitting in the seat in front of him, and every so often he would reach round to grope her leg. I was forced to be philosophical and resolve to save myself for all those wonderful

Americans I was – surely? – going to meet on my TAFF trip.

The coach arrived on time, which was a minor miracle. After a bit of wandering around, dragging my new suitcase (and discovering that one of its wheels was prone to fall off) I met up with Lilian. “You won’t believe what’s happened to me today,” she announced, rather breathlessly. Somehow she contrived to look immaculately turned-out and hysterical at the same time. I followed her to her car, and in between fighting with the Glasgow traffic, she told me, obviously to her own internal wonder, that she had given up her lecturing job at Strathclyde University and was all set to become a student again in York.

The next morning, Lilian’s father drove us to Prestwick airport, where the advantages of Prestwick over London-Heathrow immediately became clear – we had only one terminal to deal with, and a civilized quantity of people, instead of massed crowds and an endless profusion of airline desk. Once checked in, our major task was to equip Lilian with what she regarded as the perfect holiday reading. It soon became clear that the main criteria were thickness (measured in inches) and print size (only really small considered). That season’s crop of blockbusters all seemed to sport single-syllable titles like Possession or Infatuation and promise something only marginally more intelligent then the average episode of Dallas. Not surprisingly it took Lilian a while to find anything she could even contemplate reading.

Lilian’s travel agents had managed to get us window seats, but unfortunately over the wing, so we could only see anything by leaning forward and craning our necks. I let Lilian have the window seat because at that stage I still hadn’t made up my mind if I really liked looking out of aeroplane windows (particularly when the plane tips sideways) or preferred to concentrate, desperately, on what was going on inside. The stewardess offered us headphones for the in-flight entertainment for $4.00. The excitement of spending our first American money almost (but not quite) made up for the price, which was more than could be said for the film they were showing. It was a really idiotic movie about two men and a garbage truck, Were garbage trucks to be the next Hollywood schtick? we wondered, unconvinced. It was so dull that even drinking the endless airline orange juice became an attractive prospect by comparison.

Admittedly, watching without headphones did improve the entertainment value of the film somewhat. The two men jumped into the shower together. They fought. They cried. They embraced. We began to speculate about their relationship, and even contemplated putting on the headphones again. Eventually I turned to the write-up in the in-flight

magazine and discovered that they were two brothers, one a doctor and one mentally retarded. Mentally retarded brothers? Nahh, it would never take off. (And to this day I still haven't wished to see *Rain Man*.)

Having exhausted the entertainment prospects of the in-flight movie, Lilian and I were forced to invent a game to play with the numerous audio channels. We selected a channel at random and with the aid of the list given in the entertainment guide, had to guess which tune was playing. This was pretty easy on the airline equivalents of Radio 1 and 2, and even for the Country and Western channel where the words were a dead give away, but less straightforward on the religious channel, and absolutely impossible on what Lilian came to dub the skating music channel because it reminded her of the sort of music figure skaters dance to.

Despite the longueurs of the film, the orange juice, the juddering wing, the skating music, the plane finally made it to JFK. Even I risked looking out the window. America! We were really there! Somehow it didn't quite seem possible.

The man at the immigration desk was of much the same opinion, and looked us over with mounting suspicion and disapproval. He didn't like the way the only address we had to offer was a hotel at JFK itself. He had never heard of Prestwick airport. He didn't think much of the way we spelled our names. He didn't believe his computer when it said that we were not international drug thieves. But in the end, and much against his better judgement I'm sure, he gave us a permit till November and we were finally allowed through into America.

Science Fiction Chronicle editor Andy Porter had bravely volunteered to meet us at the airport, but there was no sign of him as we emerged battered but triumphant from our ordeal by immigration officialdom. Admittedly, since we didn't know Andy and he didn't know us, it was hard to be sure that he wasn't there, but scanning the crowd of people trustingly holding up signs for strangers, we couldn't see anything looking remotely like "America welcomes the triffic TAFF twins". We realized we were going to have to go it alone.

All around us was chaos. People and trolleys fought to occupy more space than was physically possible, and out on the forecourt the burning sun of the New York summer heatwave beat down with all its customary afternoon force. By dint of great intellectual exertion, we did manage to work out how to call the courtesy bus for our hotel, but we could not for the life of us discover where we should actually stand to get it. In the midst of all this I spotted someone with a sign and a green shoulder bag whom I was convinced must be Andy Porter. I set off after him at a run

Amazingly, the sign did actually say “Welcome TAFF winners”, so I felt pretty safe to greet Andy and lead him back to Lilian. Lilian was impressed at my fan spotting abilities. “How did you do that?” she said. “She went running off after you just because you had a green bag,” she added for Andy’s benefit. Andy is fairly large with a beard and glasses, but for a busy American airport this was hardly sufficient to mark him out as a fan. “Serendipity,” I said, and shrugged my shoulders modestly. Whatever the truth of the matter, we were glad to have Andy’s assistance. He helped us find the elusive courtesy bus, he tipped the driver for us and told us how much to tip the porter in the hotel ($1 per case). We boggled a bit but did as he said.

Our hotel room had a fine view over a sewage works, but just to prove we were really in New York we could see the Empire State building on the horizon. The aeroplanes flew by so close that if you watched at the window you were half-convinced they might actually come in. Andy took some pictures of us at our jaded and jet-lagged best and we exchanged reading material: a couple of issues of Science Fiction Chronicle for the latest issue of the Caprician. Then Lilian and I dropped all pretence at being fannish and reverted to normal behaviour which consisted of turning on the television and trying to watch as many channels as possible, simultaneously. Andy looked on with weary tolerance as we exclaimed over the discovery of *EastEnders* on Channel 31 at 8:30, groaned as we identified *Little House on the Prairie*, and grew less and less excited as we realized that all the remaining channels were showing either the Republican Congress or the news. The news programmes were really strange – the news-readers put so much expression in their face that you expected them to burst out with their own opinion on the events in question at any minute. Andy, in desperation, reverted to examining the quality of the duplicating paper in our fanzine. This was to be our first indication that nothing fascinated American fans more than the quality of one’s duplicating paper (and the question of what would happen when all the twiltone ran out.)

Eventually, we dragged ourselves away from the television set and went downstairs to explore. Lilian thought that the dining room was cute to which Andy retorted that it was over-priced. We wandered into a shop and marvelled at the candy bars. “They’re all in the wrong wrappers!” said I, wondering if they would sell me a conversion code along the lines of Mars = Milky Way, Kickers = Marathon etc. The only ones that looked the same as back home were the M&Ms.

Andy decided he had to get back home and left Lilian and I to eat at

the hotel with the aim of an early night (in terms of American time at least). We ate chicken salad sandwich with potato chips and gherkin in the bar and consumed too much ice-chilled wine. After all that, it was eleven o'clock American time (4 a.m. British time!) when we finally got to bed.

I woke up at about four, and again at intervals until six. Lilian did the same, so eventually we gave in and watched the television, A Canadian front had just come in and New York weather was forecast to be pleasant (only in the low to mid '80s). I discovered that my watch had gone missing, but could only be philosophical about it: at least I hadn't invested in any new batteries! Breakfast was sausage, scrambled egg and hash browns.

We thought we were in plenty of time for our flight, but the Courtesy Bus took ages to reach the United Airlines terminal, calling in at virtually every other major world airline before ours, so that in the end we had only fifty minutes to check in for our nine o'clock flight. The queue for the domestic flight desk was huge, and I was all prepared to panic, but Lilian insisted that domestic flights in America were just like catching a train: so long as we were safely checked in half an hour beforehand we wouldn't lose our seat. Sure enough, we made it to the desk in plenty of time, they took our ticket and luggage and we were all set. We went upstairs to get our seats allocated. There were a couple of queues but they were not particularly long, so we chatted confidently about asking for a window seat and how everything in America was so cute (for such a large country, Lilian would continue to insist, bizarrely, that everything was cute). Then we noticed that our queue had stopped moving. The man at the desk was typing in hundreds of names on his terminal. People began to get restive. The other queue stopped moving too. Suddenly it began to turn into a nightmare. Our plane was going on to Hong Kong from Seattle and there were clearly more people trying to get on than it could actually hold. Officials appealed to people to sell their tickets back. Random names were called out, and some people were let on. We began to get seriously worried. What if they didn't Let us on at all? What would happen to our luggage? What would John Berry do? Time ticked away. Ten to nine. Five to nine. A whole family of Chinese were given seats. I edged as near the front as I could. Suddenly the man at the desk decided to take my tickets. I didn't understand why. But he took them, checked a list and lo we were being given seat numbers. Our names were called and we could board. We were so relieved we didn't even mind that we were not given a window seat!

Once aboard chaos was still in evidence. There was some kind of

dispute over whether our cabin should be smoking or non-smoking. It looked like the cabin staff were about to take a vote. Eventually it was unilaterally declared smoke-free – but would the smokers sue? Breakfast arrived – our second breakfast of the day. It was some unidentifiably exotic orange fruit and real pineapple on a bed of lettuce. We were impressed. There was also a cake that our neighbour told us was a muffin (in those days you didn't get American style Muffins at every single British Rail station). We struggled valiantly through our second breakfast, mainly because it was too gorgeous to leave. But we did wonder what the salt and pepper were for. We were soon to discover, when our stewardess refused to take away the tray. There was more to come i.e. a choice between French toast and maple syrup or more hash brown and sausage. As before it was delicious but by this time we had only the energy to sample. "This country is going to be hell for my diet," announced a rueful Lilian. Planes are not quite the environment to walk off two hefty breakfasts, but we did our best by going to the window to watch the plane flying over the aerially attractive rugged scenery of middle America.

After a movie, and yet more food, it was almost time to land. As soon as we were off the plane, Lilian immediately spotted the tall bearded figure of John Berry, our host in Seattle. I had never met John before, but was immediately put at ease by his relaxed greetings and friendly smile. As we waited around for our luggage a woman dressed in a clown suit passed us by. She was carrying a placard which said "Marylou is 40. I'm her younger sister." "Do people always do that sort of thing in Seattle?" I asked. "No," said John, "But sometimes."

I didn't take in much of Seattle as John drove us back to his house in an old orange car that would have rusted off the road long since in Britain. I was pleasantly surprised to find that they didn't live in a large apartment block on some long and busy street as I had imagined from the high street number in their address, but in a pleasant individual house with its own porch and yard in a spacious suburban area. There I met up with Eileen Gunn, John's partner. While it was easy to decide on first encounter that I liked John, Eileen with her brooding air of complete self-possession, took more time to get used to, though I soon found myself fascinated by her lively stories and witty accounts of people.

Eileen found us a blanket to take out into the yard to enjoy the lunch-time sunshine. Sitting in the sun, it began to seem to me that the day had been going on abnormally long. For two days we had been getting on to planes to stay ahead of the sun, and it was beginning to catch up on me. I half-dozed on the rug while Eileen talked to us about her time as punk

fairy at the fair in Eugene.

Eventually John came back from some shopping and offered to take us all along to a nearby lake to swim. This was the ideal antidote to two days in aeroplanes. We all swam, then lay in the grass, looking at the mountains on the horizon, or idly listening to the extremely paternalistic life-guard shouting at the children, or anyone who dared to swim beyond the pontoon. I think it was in those lazy hours by the lake that Lilian and I first fell in love with Seattle.

Back at the house, Lilian and I were let loose on John and Eileen's record collection, which Lilian proceeded to de-folk. Few people know this, but due to obscure conditions at her birth Lilian is actually allergic to folk music, so is forced to ask very careful questions before risking her delicate health with an unknown record. While we amused ourselves with the record collection, John cooked us a wonderful meal of spicy chicken, accompanied by a nasturtium salad. We looked at the salad with some doubt. Could one really eat flowers? Eileen briskly assured us we could, so we did, but I must admit it still felt like eating flowers.

We then made the mistake of accompanying John and Eileen round to some friends of theirs to see a speech by Jesse Jackson on the television. Much as we would like to understand American politics, there was no escaping the fact that we were far too tired to make much of a go of it. From the moment I sat down it was a fight between myself and sleep which I never quite won. I kept nodding off, and Lilian went to sleep completely, I think. Eventually John and Eileen took pity on us, and took us back to their place to sleep off the jetlag, ready to make a proper start on the city of Seattle – and America – the next day.

Two Times TAFF #4, November 1990

Chapter 2: The Once and Future Seattle

Lilian Edwards

My only contribution to the continuing travel theme of The Wrong Leggings *for this issue is – gasp, shock, horror – an extract from my TAFF report. Yes, I know I haven't, er, written up any of it previously. (Dave Langford knows this too: his project to unearth unpublished chapters of past TAFF reports is one reason to produce one, fast!) Well, I was busy – um – continuing my research. Reading Bill Bryson's wonderfully witty accounts of small time Americana and the American language. Studying the dialectic of economy-sized American fanhistory zines. Making friends with Americans. Learning to make chili, muffins and pesto dressing. Going on real-world, academic-type sabbatical to Vancouver, Canada, for six months in 1993. Visiting San Francisco for ConFrancisco that same year, so I'd have a benchmark for the average standards of large American Worldcons against which to measure much reviled Nolacon, the shambolic N'Orleans Worldcon which Christina and I both perversely enjoyed. Revisiting Seattle in winter so I could compare and contrast to that sun-baked week Christina and I spent there in August 88, in John D. Berry and Eileen Gunn's comfortable basement. In fact there's a thought: why not write up TAFF-tripping Seattle of August 88 with a forward glance to sabbatical-Seattle in November 1993, as seen through the omniscient (though slightly baggy) eyes of pre-Intersection Lilian of August 1995? And what could such a concept be called but:*

The Once and Future Seattle

> For TAFF completists (does such an animal exist?), this extract roughly plugs the gap between Christina's first instalment of her trip featured in *Two Times Taff* #4 and the San Francisco piece published rather more recently in *Never Quite Arriving* #3.

Those who know me will be unsurprised to learn that virtually the first thing I did in Seattle was go shopping.

One of my first purchases on Seattle's mythical 15th Avenue East is a badge, which word I have only just learnt to translate from the American "button", on which is emblazoned "I saw America and bought it". Such pith, such encapsulation. It seems hard to believe now how impressed I was according to my notebook by miracles of American consumer merchandise we found heaped in the local drug store, like TV Guide, with its endless pages of cable TV channels, coffee mugs which declared "All I want in life is world peace and thin thighs. Actually I'm not all that bothered about world peace", and news-stand Marvel comics available up-to-date (US comics arrived three months late to the UK at this point) and at reasonable prices. *Little did I know that seven years on there would be 10 spin off X-Men titles and me without a thread of desire to buy any of them.* More commendable was Christina's and my enthusiasm for Red and Black Books, an alternative feminist/radical/wholefood/you name it bookstore which was still as zingy as ever when I went back there in 93. Everything you'd ever wanted (including most of that which had failed to get past UK customs) was there. Unimported collections of Marge Piercy poems. Novels by lesbian law professors (Ruthanne Robson – honest to god.) Magazines for "adventurous lesbians" with disconcerting open crotch shots on the inside front cover – nowhere much to hide for the unsuspecting page flipper. Walls of small ads listings, as interesting and as full of political intelligence as any Chinese wall poster. Lesbian happenings, lesbian house shares, bisexual massages (my first indication of the great Yankee massage experience) and a lesbian woman who wants to meet others interested in Joanna Russ and Ursula Le Guin. She needs to be put in touch with fandom, we agree with slight smugness. On to Horizon Books, a dusty secondhand emporium reminiscent of the book cemeteries of Hay-on-Wye, but by now we're booked out and too tired to do more than skim we retire instead to the further joys of American consumer choice and select ice creams, me predictably getting most of my strawberry cheesecake cone with hot Grand Marnier sauce down my new yellow teeshirt.

In the afternoon, our native guide John takes us via trolleybus downtown, away from the pleasant suburbs which we have been firmly instructed to call city, past the downtown skyscrapers and shops, to the commuter ferry to Bainbridge Island which lies across the sound. As usual, I have no real idea where I am crossing from or to. Up till now we've struggled simply to understand the deep geographical and psychological division between Seattle and Tacoma, where, Eileen assures us, the populace are so depressed that 39% of Tacomans say their favourite colour

is grey. *I remain perplexed, now and for the following seven years by the geography of Seattle with its multifarious lakes, fjords, sounds and odd knobbly bits of water. It is like a city out of Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy, built apparently for maximum amenity and nice crinkly edges, rather than in any sensible way. Vancouver was equally confusing but could be mastered with the help of a map, six months' study and a comprehensive swim by swim survey of each separate beach. Both Seattle and later Vancouver confronted and destroyed all my preconceptions of American cities as dusty, hot, and crowded, full of urban poor, cars the size of street blocks and costumed superheroes. (Of course these stereotypes are revived later when I get to Dallas, a space station of a city the temperature of Venus, containing only malls, freeways and prostitutes. But that's for later.)* Later, we move on to our first genuinely American Mexican restaurant for a rendezvous with Jerry Kaufman and Suzle. This was something of an event as both Christina and I had been subjected for years to an intensive training routine of eating our way through the Tex-Mex restaurants of the UK by a Sherry Coldsmith (then Sherry Francis) pining for the real and infinitely superior salsa and margaritas of her native Lone Star State. *Eventually Sherry was drawn back to the ur-source of mole sauce and poblano chilis in Hutto, Texas, taking Mike Christie with her and ended up publishing a baby quicker than a novel, much to all our amazements.* My diary records that although my steak a la chicana was nice it was not an epiphany. The restaurant, we discovered, was owned by a collective, like most the shops of 15th Ave East, again not quite my vision of the capitalist American dream. "Didn't you know that the US has 49 states plus the Soviet Republic of Seattle?" jokes the waitress. Under the influence of margaritas and jet lag I sink irretrievably into a stupor, barely alive enough to notice that the chic topics of fannish conversation are whether Gardner Dozois (Eileen's chum) will win the Best Editor Hugo, how appalling Orson Scott Card's sexual politics are, and that perennial chestnut of the late 80s, why did Interzone have to have such dreadful covers?

The next morning has been designated for an outing to Seattle's second most famous landmark, the Pike Place Market. *The most famous landmark was the Space Needle, of course, which in 1988 seemed altogether too tacky to go near. Perhaps we'd all become more tolerant or less embarrassable by 1993 when John, Andy Hooper, Carrie Root et al finally took me there.* Pike Place Market is a vision of vegetables, a lagoon of legumes, a fiesta of fish. It is the World SuperBowl of market gardening. There are heaps of obscure green Chinese leaves, gallons of

gourds, fresh herbs I've only previously seen on Mediterranean cooking programs (this is when I find out that cilantro is really coriander), live crabs oozing from their buckets, oysters, lobsters, enormous trays for whole tuna and salmon, sea-slugs and sea-snails. If only Simon Ounsley was here, I think, he would have enough material to keep him going in food metaphors for decades. *(Or was Simon still into giraffes at that point? At any rate he was incontrovertibly not there, having cancelled out of the trip at the last moment with one of his many bouts of ME. And ten minutes after I write this paragraph, Simon rings to announce his return from in order of specificity, America, Seattle and Pike Place Market. I am not the only fan to be living recurrent lives.)* And then, of course, there are the geoducks. Pronounced, "gooey-ducks". John and Eileen take great pleasure in introducing this pearl of the Pacific North-West, a type of seafood which looks almost exactly like a worse for wear penis. People eat these? It's a delicacy, we're assured – at least for the Chinese. But this is clearly not the point. Here we have a type of mollusc with its own whole sub-culture of humour, contingently connected to Eileen, Gardner, foreskins, the immaculate conception and geoduck rustlers. *The geoduck was the joke that wouldn't die. In 1993, Eileen showed me her "topic" on Genie, her Internet service, a sort of equivalent to her own personal alt.fan.eileen.gunn. "Like doing a fanzine, without having to write articles or do anything," she said – a cyberspace extension of her own personality as reinforced and reproduced by others, like a computer-virus version of oneself. Surprise; the principal thread was headlined, "Geoducks, foreskins and sex".*

At night a party is scheduled in our TAFF-winning honour. Eileen dresses up as the Punk Fairy of Eugene, in an outfit which consists of black sundress, black jacket, incredibly high black stiletto heels and a hat made of sequins and adorned with plastic chilis and defunct Christmas-tree light bulbs, with matching plastic chili ear-rings.

In competition I can only muster the pink bolero and sundress I bought cheap and rather uncertainly the day before I left the UK. En route to the supermarket to buy wine for the party. I dare to ask what the Punk Fairy actually does.

"She grants Bad Wishes!" says Eileen, menacingly.

"Well, you got your bad wish," says John grimly, surveying the check out queues, "in Safeways when there are two tills open and five people in each queue, they usually close one of them down."

Despite these vile prognostications we hustle out of Safeways with reasonable speed clutching extra size bottles of Washington State wine and

on to the freeway, where, wisely, perhaps, the other cars steer well clear of Eileen.

"People avoid me when I'm wearing this hat," she advises. "Someone wearing this could do *anything*."

At the party, Jerry Kaufman typically has everything under control. Everyone is issued sticky name badges, just like a con, although the percentage of fake badge names is somewhat higher than usual, reducing their utility as a way of helping us meet the local lumpenfandom. Spurious inverted commas and middle initials multiply and Eileen is re-christened Helen Highwater for reasons that evade me – an American soap character? It quickly becomes apparent that the cool people – including Tami, the Eskimo leather dyke and apparent adoration object of Seattle fandom, Randy Byers, designated the fanciable one, and Denys Howard, a dark, scrumptious looking gay fan who reminds me of Jodie from *Soap* (i.e. Billy Crystal, who later became the recipient of Meg Ryan's out-of-body orgasm and wasn't actually gay at all) – will hang around smoking on the front stairs while non-smoking underlings inside the house are left to prepare nibbles. Christina and I in our guise as cosmopolitan travellers naturally choose to kibitz outside even though it's unexpectedly freezing and neither of us has on a jacket. Tami, who despite her S/M appearance is as soft as butter, drapes her studded and buttoned leather biker jacket around Christina's shoulders, leaving herself in "basic black" ie top to tail leather. As she drinks more, Tami tells us of her planned months-long fish gutting expedition to Alaska to pay off her debts and becomes fascinated by the chromatic contrast of my pink dress. Perhaps she has never seen so much of so naff a colour at a Seattle Vanguard party. I am declared Pretty in Pink. I have become, by cosmic forces, the Sugar Plum Fairy to Eileen's Punk version.

Meanwhile Jerry, who has recently been to Britain for a Mexicon, is recounting his observations of how the whole of UK female fandom is in lust with Geoff Ryman (sigh) to no great avail. *(Some things never change.)* "What a bummer!" says Denys with considerable and understandable fellow feeling – before going off to the wedding of a friend who's dying of AIDS.

Later events at the party become more surreal. Though I don't know it now, this is probably as drunk as I will ever see a conglomeration of US fans, whose tipple on later stops runs more to iced tea than Zinfandel and Chardonnay. Suzle produces a squash which seems quite unreasonably large. "That's a wine box, not a vegetable!" we scream.

"You could kill someone with that," I suggest brightly, "then chop it

up and make it into soup. The Pacific North West version of the frozen leg-of lamb murder mystery."

My diary is extracted and taken over by an unknown fan who fills it with paeans of undying love to Tami, "Tami cliffs, Tami rushing water, T-A-M-I, one 'm' and an 'I', gnarled moss, gripping strong, releases sweet." *(Any poet laureate out there want to admit to this one?)* Someone – Randi? – comes up with the perfect shirt slogan. My brother was sodomized and all I got was this lousy tee-shirt. I am invited to demonstrate glottal stops but fail, despite being a native Glaswegian. Janice Murray asks to join TWP *(and eventually years later, actually does, but not for long).* I feel wonderfully important, a real emissary from UK fandom. TAFF seems to have a point if it can make fans I have never heard of, never sent a fanzine to, want to sit and have a good time with me in the middle of the night on the edge of the continent.

Five years later I make it down from Vancouver for my second ever Seattle party, a Vanguard party at Amy Thomson's. Although I have a good time, I feel very marginal. There are still squashes in the kitchen. Jon Singer arrives unexpectedly, embraces me and gives me his latest email address but simultaneously tells me he has such a backlog of e-correspondence he won't be able to reply for six months at least. Why not just use the phone I think? I talk more of work and computers than fanzines and vegetables. Amy has a new lover post-divorce but her sundress doesn't close at the back. Back at the house John and I talk into the small hours about aging, depression and world music. He admits to reaching 40 and going through two years of confusion as to where his life was going and if there was any of it that it was time to change. I remember how I came back from America in 1988, threw up my job, went back to university and became very depressed. I think that for the last five years I have cherished Seattle as a beacon of hope, optimism, a place where hippy values and sunshine had not surrendered. Is it possible that in Seattle too people get older and feel confused?

The next morning we rouse groggily for "our usual early start" as John wryly remarks. (It's about 3 p.m.) Enough of this fannish stuff and lounging around, we are to have a real cross-America trip and our destination is the Cascades, the mountains that head north from Seattle across the Canadian border eventually running into the Rockies proper. On the freeway Interstate 5, John tells us that the Douglas firs on either side of the road hide the urban sprawl of suburban Seattle. Nothing further from urban sprawl could be imagined – the countryside is rural, undisturbed, bathed in light. Occasionally we see signs for fresh corn on the cob, or

pick your own blueberries. I wonder what our hosts would think of Birmingham and the approach to the Royal Angus Hotel. En route we sample the usual couple of quintessentially American foods; frozen yogurt tastes just like icecream, I decide, but root beer tastes basically of TCP.

Into the mountains – the river rolling along on our left, dammed for hydroelectric power at the town of Marblemont. This is, for some reason, the last sensible place name for some time. Shortly after we roll into the princely town of Concrete, all three blocks of it, complete with signs announcing both our welcome and our farewell to the State Bank of Concrete. Between these two Rubicons we glimpse a department store with a dusty window full of 1950s fashions and a grocery where I imagine one might find the generic tins marked FOOD which Emilio Estevan ate out of in *Repo Man*. If Seattle has failed to be the big American city of the movies, small town America at least seems to hold out the promise of cliché. Any minute now, I think, we might even find a serial killer.

As night draws in, the countryside thins to a sprinkling of farms, chiropractors and churches. (There seems no American community so small it does not need an on-hand cure for back pain as well as spiritual healing.) Every house has a satellite dish – unsurprisingly, as this seems the only entertainment on offer for miles other than the love of God. John and Eileen look worried. It seems every possible eatery out here has already closed at just after 9 – in America, the land of the all-night hamburger. Another illusion shattered. So it's back on the road, looking for cabins to sleep in and sources of nourishment. And here it is: two bedrooms in a wooden Hideaway for $45 for the four of us, deep in woods swarming with half wild half tame white and brown rabbits. There's even a chapel for a maximum of 9 supplicants, and the visitor's book proves not just the rabbits use it. At Marblemont we even find an open diner with "generic American food" which seems more interesting than that description promotes: John's roast beef sandwich, for example, comes with what appears to be a mound of chocolate sauce on top as well as a cup of gravy on the side. Yum.

In the morning we resolve sternly to make better time. After a swift but enormous breakfast of fresh blueberry pancakes and cream (yum for real), it's off again, past the glorious copper sulphate blue Lake Diablo (where we succumb to heat, and stop, and swim), past the dirty white rock adjacent to the highway which looks like lime or sandstone but on closer inspection proves to be a small but genuine partially melted glacier. Ice, and the temperature is 80 degrees! I boggle. The countryside spreads out as verdant as a butter advert, lakes and rivers abound, firs spread up the

hills and then gradually, we climb to the top of the pass, down the other side of the Cascades and now the whole climate changes, the heat is dry, the vegetation erodes into desert. We are in the mythical Wild West and the first town for 89 miles (as advertised) is coming up in front.

Winthrop's whole raison d'etre is to be a Wild West town, having been preserved roughly as it was in 1902. Saloons! BBQs! Heat boils pulsatingly off the wooden sidewalks mixed with the heavenly aromas of BBQ beef. It's all at least superficially authentic enough to fool the tourists – and the film crews – except for one "Don't Even Think of Parking Here" sign which John reckons has been shipped over from the East in defiance of the local byelaws.

The retreat from the desert takes us back across the Cascades on the last leg of our slow circular route. It's solid driving from here despite the heat if we're to get home without another overnight stop. Poor John drives stolidly at the absurdly low US speed limit on wide and deserted highways that could have been urban dual carriageways at home. One persistent road sign perplexes me: TAIL OF 5 VEHICLES ILLEGAL – USE TURNOUT. What does the fifth vehicle do? Self destruct? Eileen explains that on steep roads it means a slow lorry with a tail of vehicles should get off the road and let the other traffic past. How prosaic. Outside we have re-entered the twilight zone of towns with little to offer but silly names and Dairy Queens. Start-Up. Monroe. Cashmere ("home of aplets and cotlets" it adds bizarrely.) But soberly named Leavenworth is the best yet. In baking heat, it is modelled on a Bavarian ski resort. I feel like we have entered a dream sequence as we drive past the Gothic-lettered Safeways and the Tyrolean Inn. *If Twin Peaks had been on television by this time I would have undoubtedly have compared its dislocating small town eeriness to that.* After Leavenworth we become slightly hysterical. The next signs are for Sultan. Will it have minarets and theme Turkish casbahs? No. In fact, it's pretty dull. It's dark now and John is driving on auto pilot. Finally we start to limp towards the industrial outskirts of Seattle. 400 miles we've driven – the same distance as Edinburgh to London – and we've only done a minor two day loop in one tiny corner of the North West. For the first time I have some real idea of the enormity of America, a fact not viscerally grasped even from the trans-Continental plane flight. It's 10:30 p.m. and our choice of eating comes down to the University district and Greek, Italian or yuppie cuisine, the latter chosen out of unfamiliarity. Yuppie cuisine seems to consist mainly of home-made sausage. Last in the restaurant, (as usual) our cheerful waitress finally evicts us only by threatening to bring pillows and blankets.

Our final day in Seattle is devoted to recovery, shopping and ritual photography. In front of us lay our next port of call, San Francisco and Lucy Huntzinger's apartment where the air was already thick with pre-Worldcon tension and alleged sightings of Elvis. But that too is another story.

The Wrong Leggings #3, August 1995

Let’s Go to San Francisco

Christina Lake

TUESDAY 23rd August 1988

Seattle was always going to be a hard act to follow. Visiting with John Berry and Eileen Gunn had been pure holiday. Lounging on their back porch in the sunshine, drinking microbrewery beers and Washington wines. A leisurely trip round the Cascades. Plenty of swimming. All so much more relaxed than my image of life in an American city.

We flew out to San Francisco late in the afternoon. This time we had a window seat, but all we could see was the glare of the sun and then the colours of sunset and a dark sea moving against an even darker shore.

The plane was in slightly late, but there was no sign of Lucy. Had we told her the wrong day? The wrong time? But no, there was Lucy, all in black, hair dyed blonde, rushing up to hug us. I made the usual mental readjustments to my image of her, catching up as she whisked us along the moving pavement towards the exit. Lucy and Lilian seemed full of energy, and Lucy, eager to do the right thing by us on our first night in San Francisco drove us up to Twin Peaks (Nothing to do with the TV show, which anyway was not to hit our screens for another two years) where we could overlook the whole city. Lucy enthusiastically pointed out landmarks, while Lilian admired the pretty lights and I tried to take an intelligent interest.

Back at Lucy’s flat we were given the guided tour. The shoes in pride of place on her bookshelves, the cuddly penguin collection, the girly pink phone, the unpacked cardboard boxes, evidence, she told us, of her unsettled lifestyle. Then there was John’s TV room where John hung out (the subtext being that he needed somewhere to retreat from our incursion), the living room, which Lilian and I were to share with John’s gerbils and a large poster of three chickens in dark glasses (presumably a tribute to the chicken brothers), the bathroom with its shower curtains depicting the world in plastic and a copy of “Is Elvis alive?” on the window sill. Apparently we had hit America at the height of Elvis-mania, and there had been as many reported sightings of Elvis Presley back from the dead as visions of the Virgin Mary, Lucy told us with great enthusiasm. Lilian looked unconvinced – not so much by the news of the

sightings, but by the whole concept of anyone caring enough to take the subject seriously. But Lucy, with her interest in kitsch culture, simply loved it.

WEDNESDAY 24th August

Lucy and John both had to go to work, so we were left to fend for ourselves. How will we cope? I wrote anxiously in my notebook. Will we even find the subway? (Sorry, tram, I amend later.) Will we even know which way downtown is? Fortified by one of the gorgeous cinnamon pastries that America is so good at, the answer was yes, but only with some difficulty. We went downtown as far as Powell where the jazz bands played and the cable cars were supposed to start (but didn't as there was some snarl-up further down the line). At the tourist information centre we asked how to get to Lombard Street, without the cable cars (which I still envisaged as suspended above the city like a ski lift. I was soon to be disabused by the earth-bound reality of carriages pulled by wires running through the streets.) They suggested a bus. The guy ahead of us was asking where he could buy *Star Trek* stuff. This really freaked us out. Especially as the dude at the desk didn't know the answer. Lilian stepped in to suggest "Comix & Comix" on Lombard Street. Hah, we thought, you can't say we TAFF winners don't provide a service to the whole SF community.

By the time we finished battling with the transport system, it felt like time to eat again. We reckoned we were somewhere near the restaurant Lucy had recommended for lunch. We even found the right intersection, but not the Hunan. Eventually we settled for Hong Kong (cuisine or restaurant name? Maybe both) where they served three courses, if you count jello as a course, which on the whole we didn't, for $3.50. We then wandered round Chinatown, looking at the tack, trying to sell each other stuff. Lilian sold me a purse for holding jewellery, but then sold herself several more of them (I have a built-in advantage at this game) and a map of the world in Chinese (little realizing that one day she would have a boyfriend who was a lecturer in Chinese, who could supply her with all the Chinese junk she could ever want!). We also watched a man finger-painting (how does he get the line so fine?) and freaked out over Chinese computer books, with the explanations in Chinese and actual programming stuff in English. After a while, it began to seem like there was no escape from Chinatown. We kept coming back to the same little park full of China men (and, bizarrely, a statue of Robert Louis Stevenson) and it was only by a real effort of will that we made it into the Italian sector (Italytown?) where we spent an hour mastering a peach sorbet (or, if truth be told, resting our poor tired touristing feet).

After all this wandering around it was time to navigate ourselves off to Lucy's office to meet up with her and Rich Coad. If Lilian found it a strain meeting up with Rich, whom she had once been married to in a fanzine, she didn't let it show. Lucy was taking us to the infamous Tonga Rooms, which she enthused about lovingly. "It's really over the top. They even have fake thunder storms! " The whole place was done out as a kind of subterranean Polynesian theme bar, with Polynesian rigging and bush umbrellas. Every so often, when they were feeling generous, they would run the storm sequence and we would get a tightly focused rain storm complete with thunder and lightning in one corner of the room.

After getting ourselves cocktails, we were joined by "Denise Rehse's niece Therese", Denise herself and Sonya (Rich's real wife). Therese was dark and languorous, Denise sharp and energetic, and Sonya was calm, though she did keep eating everyone's fruit from the cocktails, especially the cherries. Therese gave Lucy a late birthday present, mainly consisting of fish in some form or other. What did it all mean? Was it connected to Joe Wesson being the fish deity? And why *was* Joe Wesson the fish deity? But the crazy theme park world of the Tonga Rooms did not seem the right place to ask for sensible explanations. Instead, we all went to grab the free appetizers, piling up our plates with breaded zucchini, battered mushrooms and chicken pieces (rather reminiscent of that Cheers episode where they all desert Sam's establishment to go to the trendy cocktail bar with the good munchies – but that too was to be in the future.) Every so often there would be another rain storm. After two cocktails this almost seemed natural.

Eventually even the wonders of the Tonga Rooms began to pall and the others went home, while Lucy took us up to the Starlite Rooms overlooking the city where we had one of those really good conversations about parents, life, love, and maybe even fanzines (though I wouldn't guarantee it).

THURSDAY 25th August

As old hands at this business of navigating round San Francisco, we headed out with confidence to Fisherman's Wharf. This time the cable cars were actually running, and needless to say, crowded with tourists. It was a bit like going on a very slow roller coaster ride. Fisherman's Wharf turned out to be infinitely tacky. All the museums looked like amusement arcades and all the stalls sold cheap trash and take-away seafood. But what else should we have expected? At least the marinas round the piers were quite pretty. Eventually we found a lido and a beach, and I proved that I was more of a fool than Lilian by going swimming. I think she was put off by

the fact that the only place to change was a very public toilet with no lock on it! This was one of those very rare days for San Francisco when it was completely clear and sunny, so I was subsequently able to freak people out by claiming, truthfully, that I had got my sun tan on a beach in San Francisco. In fact, we soon retreated from the beach to a nearby park where we got to know the repertoire of the busker by the cable car stop extremely well (Stray Cats was his best and Yesterday his worst!). Lucy's bread ticket (whatever that was!) entitled us to a half price tour of the Bay which of course, no self respecting visitor to San Francisco can do without. So, it was under Golden Gate Bridge (hold on, it's choppy!), up to the Bay Bridge, round Alcatraz, cameras clicking all the way. Lilian kept telling me off for not taking enough pictures. It was true that I was still on my first film to approximately her third, but then I didn't know how to take the film out of the camera, so was not going to use it all up on the backs of the baseball caps of my fellow passengers. The commentary was pre-recorded and sporadic. Every time it stopped there was a *ding!* not dissimilar to that made by the cable cars as they picked up passengers. Lilian's theory was that everything in San Francisco was trying to sound like a cable car.

We dined Mexican on the famous Pier 39 – half price with the ferry tickets, then to complete the tour of the famous bits of San Francisco went off in search of the famous wiggly bit of Lombard Street. More importantly still, we made it to the Comic Shop ten minutes before closing time, so that Lilian could restock on Omaha The Cat Dancer (the then trendy, but difficult to get through customs, comic).

Back at Lucy's there was consternation – Greg Pickersgill was going to the Worldcon! Lucy was on the phone half the night to her network of friends, working herself into a pre-convention frenzy. "This time next week we'll be partying our brains out!" she exclaimed to Phil Palmer. There was even a call from Joe Wesson, her Alabama sweetie. Baby, baby, baby! Lucy was just real excited. In the midst of so much happening, Lilian and I managed to find it noteworthy that we were getting our first door-to-door pizza delivery. Clearly such things were unknown in our own home towns at this time. It seemed like a good system – the pizza boy delivered the wrong type of pizza so we got an extra one free. This could really catch on, I thought.

FRIDAY 26th August

Another day of hectic tourist activity, this time spent at the Golden Gate Park, mainly in the Academy of Science, where we "did" the gemstone collection, the aquarium, the fish roundabout, the planetarium, and, of course, the shop. Lilian bought a T-shirt. I failed to buy another

film.

Back at Lucy's, Lucy was busy cutting up fruit and John was out buying pie. The dinner party guests were some friends of theirs called Terry and Pam, and their kid Alex. Alex went mad playing with Lucy's Flying Penguin toy while the rest of us ate M&Ms (Lucy's party theory being that you should indulge in all the foods you can't justify normally). Lucy's chicken was covered in hot Vietnamese sauce and was delicious. The chocolate silk pie was even better. (But what happened to the fruit? Was it in the Vietnamese sauce? Did she make fruit punch? My notes as ever are coy on these important points).

Soon after we had scoffed all the best food, more people arrived and we were swamped in fun and excitement. (That's what my notes say. Honest.) We met Brad and Wendy who had offered us accommodation (so I really ought to remember their surname) and Donya and Alan (ditto, though of course because I know them now, I find it totally unnecessary to mention their surname here, on the assumption that everyone knows them just as well as me – which judging by their recent mammoth tour of Great Britain, they probably do!). Donya told me about Apanage, the children's fantasy apa – which interestingly enough, if I had signed up for there and then I might by now be within striking distance of the top of the waiting list. Tom Whitmore offered to help out in the TAFF/DUFF auction, which immediately made him popular with Lilian and I. Alan Bostick wore a Godzilla T-shirt, which I doubt had a similar effect. Dave Clark handed out the Bay area listing which I dutifully used to tick off the names of the people at Lucy's gathering (but have long since lost!). So fascinated was I by the great variety of apas available in the States that I began to collect them – a music apa, APA 50 (for people born after 1950, not people over 50, I believe). Then Jon Singer came in and we collapsed into back rubs. Photos were taken of what looks like mass orgies on Lucy's sofabed, wine was drunk, wine was spilt and we were drunk. Eventually Sharee Carton and her husband turned up much to everyone's excitement. (I think this note implies they were excited about Sharee who was a tall, beautiful looking woman.) When most of the people had gone, Sharee showed us her snake tattoo, which went all the way round her body. This was in some ways a bad night to stay up drinking to all hours, since we had to get a bus to Allyn Cadogan's house the next day, but needless to say we hardly gave it a thought at the time. Little did we realize that Allyn was throwing a party for us the next afternoon....

More to follow, in the next exciting instalment. Maybe next issue? I'll see what the response to this part is. If you're all bored brainless by the

events of six/seven years ago, then I'll have to try and do something more exciting.

Never Quite Arriving #3, January 1995

Voodoo Jambalaya

Christina Lake

By the Sunday of the Worldcon, Lilian and I had thoroughly adapted to the lifestyle: get up at midday, go to whichever panel(s) we'd been put on that day, eat at six, recover, go to that night's quota of parties, collapse into bed about five in the morning – and repeat. That day I'd been persuaded to meet Alyson Abramowitz in the lobby of the Marriot at 12:30 to go out for lunch with the women of AWA (the American women's apa). "You have to," Alyson had informed me the night before. "You're women aren't you?"

This being undeniably true, I'd said yes.

Leaving Lilian asleep in her bed, not sure if she were woman or vegetable, I went to sit in the lobby of the Marriot, trying to look inconspicuous as fans of all denominations streamed past in an awesome tide. I felt not so much a TAFF delegate as a visitor to an alien planet. Nonetheless, my disguise was penetrated by George "Lan" Laskowski who ambled over, apparently expecting normal conversation. I did my best. "No, it's not raining outside – I've just come out of the shower," I told him to explain the wet hair. Normally in New Orleans the drowned rat look means that you've just been caught in one of the frequent cloud-bursts that can soak you to the skin waiting to cross the road. Eventually George decided he had some twelve page articles to catch up with and disappeared, photographer in tow : fanzine production is big business in the U.S. of A.

Alyson arrived looking inhumanly cheerful, and took me up to where the women were assembling. In the lift, we met two more AWA people: "Hello," said one, "I'm Anna Vargo's mother." "And I'm Anna Vargo's sister," said the other. Fortunately I'd met Anna Vargo in Seattle so I was not too bemused, though I'm not used to this type of whole family participation. I half expected to find her aunt and grandmother waiting for us upstairs. In fact there were only two people in the room I recognized, Canadian fan Catherine Crockett and the sempiternal Alan Bostock, who seemed to have being turning up everywhere ever since we'd met him in California. What's he doing here, I wondered? Surely he can't be a member of AWA – didn't Jessica Amanda Salmonson chuck all the men

out years ago? Nobody bothered to explain, but when he started kissing the tall black woman wearing a badge saying D. (David) Potter, things began to seem clearer. Looking around, and by dint of squinting at badges, I managed to ascertain that the room also contained Canadian librarian Fran Skene, whom I should have recognized from Channelcon, Paula Liebermann and another black woman called Allyson Dwyer. Alan left and the rest of us set out for Felix's, the slowest fish restaurant in New Orleans (as we were soon to discover).

I found myself sitting opposite the two Allysons, who were soon busily exchanging notes on how to spell their names. "Allyson with a 'y' is pretty uncommon in the UK," I said with stunning acuity, feeling that, as visiting delegate, I owed them this observation. They were duly impressed; in their grade school class all the Allysons had been blessed with y's. Fortunately the limits of the topic were apparent, even to the most enthusiastic Allysonophile, and Allyson Dwyer switched to discoursing on the secret of the success of her marriage. "We spend all of our days apart," she explained cheerfully. Apparently her husband is into video fandom, whatever that might be. "But we're still part of the same subculture," she concluded triumphantly, "so it works." It sounded almost plausible.

Allyson told us she was going to put a full page ad in the programme book when her husband came out of the services. "It will simply say 'We are free!'" Talk then goes on to using pages of the worldcon programme book for obituaries, complete with black borders for anyone deceased who has contributed in any way to fandom. They are serious – I find it gruesome. Maybe this is another example of the cultural gap between Britain and America. But from death we get on to resurrection. Allyson Dwyer claimed there had been a lot of revenants at the convention – people she hadn't seen in years. "That's why they're calling it voodoo-con," she said enthusiastically. It's the culture gap again. Not being part of the American mass Worldcon gestalt I can't distinguish between newcomer, revenant and regular.

Anna Vargo's sister asked who won the bid for the 1991 worldcon. The Chicon flyer was passed round, along with a pocket calculator to work out how to convert from various types of membership. Outside it was raining the typical tropical New Orleans rain again, but no-one was worried, except Fran Skene who had to get back for the children's programme. "They can't do it without me," she explained pitifully, as she scraped together change, including a Toronto subway token, to pay for her meal. (The money was going to Catherine Crockett for whom a Toronto subway token is as good as currency).

Meanwhile I started on my gumbo which in this restaurant was a murky brown fish soup poured over a plateful of rice. I suspected that I did not have the best example of the genre – but by this time the food had been so long coming I was thankful to be served at all. Still the tardiness had its virtues – by the time we left it was only drizzling, and I was in with a fighting chance of missing my panel appearance of the day (especially as Alyson insisted on taking a group photo in the scenic Marriott car park.)

But after all I made it in time to join Lilian, Jerry Kaufman, Patrick Nielsen Hayden and Teddy Harvia in selecting jewels of fannish wit and wisdom to appear in a hypothetical *Fanthology '88*. Feeling distinctly redundant, I examined my scattered thoughts and found them irrelevant. Fortunately Lilian had made a list from our various musings on the subject. Less fortunately, Jerry Kaufman had made one too – containing, quite literally, hundreds of suggestions, emanating from his abiding enthusiasm for fandom, not one of which he was prepared to sacrifice. Famous editor of *File 770*, Mike Glyer, a large, stolid looking man, was moderator. He seemed quite happy to let Jerry work through his list while Patrick, Lilian and I said where we agreed or disagreed. Finally even Mike came to realize that this could go on forever, and tried to draw in Teddy Harvia the token artist, sitting isolated on the far end of the panel looking bored. Teddy suggested that articles be sent out to be illustrated by worthy artists. Patrick poured scorn on this. Deadlines would be missed. The fanthology never completed. When he and Teresa had done one they had stuck to the written word. Someone else suggested portfolios, someone else art editors, but most people thought that Dennis Virzi should just go ahead and do it the way he had last year. The panel broke up and Lilian, Jeanne Gomoll and I decided that what we really wanted to do was a multi-continental feminist/female anthology, showcasing the works of Sherry Coldsmith, Jenny Steele et al.

I disentangled myself from the conversation before I could be tempted to volunteer for something I might later regret and went to look at the dealer's room. Surely I would find something fabulous in the dealer's room of a big American convention? Surely it would be an experience not to be missed? Well, actually, no. I'd seen better selections of books in some of the stores of San Francisco, newer American editions at British conventions, more children's fantasy in Horfield junior library. In fact most of the stalls seemed mainly interested in selling *Star Trek* memorabilia or dragon/unicorn jewellery.

Unimpressed I went off to see a panel enticingly entitled "Real Writers Don't Write Short Fiction". Of course, it was entirely a defence of

short fiction peopled mainly by writers who'd had several stories in *Aboriginal SF* or some such. It was decided to the satisfaction of all concerned that short stories required more intellectual effort than novels, trilogies and Terry Pratchett books. As before at other panels I was impressed by the articulateness of the fans who contributed from the audience, particularly the women who argued with an optimistic confidence that is rare among British women.

Next the most important decision of the day – where to eat. Lucy Huntzinger was forming a party, but Lilian and I wanted to get back in time for the Hugos, so instead opted for the charms of Popeyes, the Southern Fried chicken joint next to the hotel. This place was pretty good as fast food emporia go, offering fried chicken, "dirty" chicken rice (made from the parts of chicken no-one want in their fried chicken – but very nice all the same) and biscuit (a savoury scone-like accompaniment favoured in this part of the world). The perfect venue for any self-respecting chicken brother (had they not all gone off with Lucy).

Then it was back to our room to change for the Hugos. I remember that I put on something black and shiny, but my notes don't say anything about what Lilian was wearing, but knowing her it was probably something black and shiny too. Not that we were anticipating winning anything, and we didn't know at that point that we were going to be made to stand up in front of everyone (Look – real live TAFF winners. The embarrassment!) But we did have passes for the nominees section to pick up prizes for *Interzone* or Dave Langford should they win, so we thought we might as well at least dress up a bit – just in case we got invited to any exclusive pros parties (one lives in hope). Outside the hall where they held the Hugos was chaos. Even the magic blue passes weren't getting us anywhere. Pro and fan alike milled outside the closed door, looking bemused, or in the case of Tom Whitmore, who'd been helping out in the (dis)organization all weekend, wryly amused. Eventually they decided to let us in. Happily seated behind Texas hopefuls Pat Mueller and Dennis Virzi and next to Tom Whitmore, I saw nemesis approach me in the form of a ginormous (or even humungous) American fan. There was an empty seat next to me. I quailed. The ginormous fan looked down our row then went away. I relaxed. The ginormous fan came back and sat down next to me. I found myself with only half a seat left, and a choice of being over-intimate with him or with Lilian. Naturally I chose Lilian.

The preparations went on. The room got hotter. I wondered if I could take off my black shiny top and strip down to the black skimpy one underneath, but there wasn't enough room to move an arm without

colliding with mountains of fat, let alone start wriggling out of clothing. The ceremony began, sensibly starting with the minor awards for people who'd been around fandom for a long time (which made perfect sense in the context of America – I expect they do the same for long-serving members of any club) and Japanese translators who'd brought the works of Cordwainer Smith to the Orient and working up through the fan awards to the big exciting prizes reserved only for the likes of Orson Scott Card and David Brin. Excitement in the Texas contingent reached fever pitch when Pat Mueller's *Texas SF Inquirer* won best fanzine (vindicating her against the forces of evil in the Texas group who'd taken the editorship of the fanzine away from her) and Brad Foster won best fan artist. Relief was the main emotion in our row when *Interzone* failed to win the *Locus*, sorry semi-prozine, Hugo (won much to everyone's surprise by *Locus*) and Langford failed to get the award for fan writer with the highest circulation. As predicted, *Watchmen* won the *Watchmen* Hugo and Linda Pickersgill wearing something shiny and Japanese (but not black) went to pick it up. Orson Scott Card modestly claimed that he didn't deserve his Hugo for best novella (won against a Kim Stanley Robinson vote split between two stories), but showed no sign of giving it back. David Brin in his hat did ape impressions. After that the only sensible option was to go to the Hugo losers party.

It was at this party that I finally found one of those mythical bath tubs stuffed full with ice and beer, that I'd heard so much about before I left for America. But the excitement of fumbling through the non- and marginally alcoholic for a bottle of Becks soon palled and after the room became too crowded we went off to check out Lucy Huntzinger's party in the legendary room 1630 (a party suite supplied for the duration by Dana Siegel (how rich is this woman?)). Bill Wagner a large, amiable American who was feeling a bit morose because he'd just split with his girl friend began expounding his theory on the restoration of virginity. I forget the details, mainly because I wasn't taking it seriously at the time, but it seemed to involve nuns and strange popping noises on aeroplanes. "Yes, Bill," I said to keep him happy (after all, we were planning to crash at his flat in New York). "Yes, Bill, I'm sure that we'll all get our virginity back some day." But this seemed to be missing the point. There was a whole ethos involved that encompassed rescuing damsels (or if necessary, female fans) in distress and no doubt other great acts of gentlemanly valour. Meanwhile, Terry Dowling, the DUFF winner, got out his guitar and played Beatles songs. For some reason this seemed absolutely right at the time. It was not an arcane practice that had to be performed like filk songs

in the privacy of a room full of enthusiasts, but something as natural as putting on a tape. A short while later Teresa Nielsen Hayden arrived dressed as if she'd just raided Kate Solomon's wardrobe, looking like a Renaissance queen, but with baseball shoes underneath to keep things in perspective.

Just as in the haze of memory one party blurs into another, so the downstairs Lucy party in room 1630 blurred into the more intimate Lucy post party party upstairs. So intimate in fact that half the denizens of Lucy's room seemed to be asleep or at least pretending they'd like to be. Linda Pickersgill, Bill and I, plus a guy called Rusty that Linda knew from New Orleans fandom took the hint and left. Downstairs the lobby was curiously empty. Even the British official drinking team had gone to bed. "Let's go off and find a bar," said Linda the native, taking over. But New Orleans seemed to have gone to bed too. The evening crowds along Bourbon Street had evaporated to virtually nothing. Not surprising, since it was about four or five in the morning. Still it was "adventure" – to be wandering around this foreign city in the middle of the night, revelling in the knowledge that I was a long way from home.

The all-night bar was fairly empty though there was still that edge of excitement that comes from late-night people. Rusty told us it was his thirty seventh birthday – we clinked our bottles of Dixie's and tried to look celebratory, ignoring the fact that Bill kept falling asleep. But before we'd even got to the bottom of them, the all-night bar closed. Linda was philosophical. All-night might not quite mean *all* night, but we could always go to Cafe Du Monde. Cafe Du Monde really did stay open all night, though only the inside tables were in use. Cafe Du Monde is one of New Orleans most famous tourist traps in the centre of the French Quarter, famous for its chicory coffee (what, no alcohol? I said when I first went there) and sugary doughnuts known as beignets. We took a few beignets to raise our blood sugar level and then went out to the banks of the Mississippi.

Sitting on the steps overlooking the silver grey of the river in the early morning light, just upstream from a dormant river boat was totally unreal. I'm actually *here*, I thought. On the *Mississippi*. In *New Orleans*. At six in the morning.

We sat there exchanging gossip, waiting for the sun to rise.

Walking back in the bright sunshine I reflected that this was the prettiest I'd seen New Orleans so far. The early morning freshness and light contrasted pleasantly with the heavy overcast face the city had shown us till then.

Back at the hotel R.A. Lafferty was determinedly making his doddering way out for his early morning constitutional. My watch said half past seven. I decided it was about time to go to bed.

The Caprician #4, May 1989

The Untitled Chapter

Christina Lake

It was Lise Eisenberg, I think, who first told me there would be a fanzine convention in Toronto. Which was rather ironic, since in the end Lise couldn't make it, and I did. In any case, a group of us were eating in a restaurant in New Orleans, and Lise mentioned the con, and a quick piece of mental arithmetic – without even having to resort to Moshe's calculator – confirmed my first suspicion : it would be taking place the same weekend I was due to be in Toronto.

Full of excitement, I rushed back to the hotel to write a postcard to Peter-Fred (a wholly futile action since the British post was already on strike, but I didn't know that at the time) then went to find out the details from Catherine Crockett.

Ditto, I thought, what a strange name. So called because it's meant to be some kind of Canadian copy of Corflu? I didn't like to display my ignorance in a country where duplicators are called mimeos and toilets restrooms, so it took a while to discover that a ditto machine is one of those horrible-smelling spirit duplicators that my mother used to run to make work sheets for her school. I am still none the wiser – why should anyone have a convention to celebrate these contraptions?

Peter-Fred, neither forewarned nor forearmed, joins me in New York, and we hire a car to see some of America and drive to my relatives in Burlington (a little known suburb of Toronto). Leaving behind us a trail of parking tickets ("I hope the Quebec police don't talk to the Ontario police, dear!"), we embark with enthusiasm on the local GO train (so named because it doesn't, or at least not very fast) to Toronto. We go to check out the hotel for signs of life, only to find, according to a notice in the hotel lobby, that there will be nothing happening till six at the Ditto "meeting". Oh well, back round Toronto to pass up the opportunity of a trip to Jupiter at the CN tower (only eleven dollars fifty), to eat Polish hot dogs and buy comics at prices we can't afford.

We arrive back at 6:30 and wander confidently – or at least as confidently as one can in an underlabelled hotel in a foreign country – to the room where the con is supposed to be taking place. We see someone hovering outside, and think, ah yes, this is it – the committee, the overspill,

the harbinger of life, action and the kind of fun you can only get from days of not sleeping and alcoholic abuse.

But no. There is just one person there, and he is as baffled as us as to where the rest of the convention is. In Britain it would have been easy. We could have said, with some confidence – "Oh well, they'll be down in the bar!" But I've been in North America long enough to know that more than likely they won't be. We look, and sure enough there is only one large group, and they're all women. So unless it's the Toronto equivalent of a women's apa meeting, I guess we're out of luck. Peter-Fred has an alternative brainwave; we'll try and get some of the committee's room numbers out of the hotel and ring them up. We do so, and after a short conversation with Catherine Crockett, we're in possession of the vital information: con suite in Room 901. Simple when you know where.

Up in the con suite, Mike Glicksohn is holding court, bottle of beer in one hand.

"How did you enjoy New Orleans?" he asks, astutely recognizing me.

"Great," I say.

This is clearly the wrong answer. "Well, you're the only one who thinks so."

"The con was badly organized," I agree, "but the parties were good." I smile suggestively, and hope to be let off the hook. Mike starts making introductions, most of which, after five weeks training in meeting new people, I forget straight away.

Meanwhile, Catherine Crockett turns up and Glicksohn decides that an hour late could be a good time to open registration. We stay behind for a beer (not to be taken out of the con suite under any circumstances – unless your name is Mike Glicksohn). The room is now quiet and intimate, and Catherine, Hope Leibowitz and San Francisco fan Gary Mattingly start exchanging ratings on various drugs/drugs experience. Eventually it gets too much for Cathy and she has to rush back to her room for her supplies. "This is going to be an interesting evening," chuckles Hope. Indeed it is. Slightly out of touch with reality, I drift downstairs to the programme room, where the convention fanthology is being collated. "We'll just watch," I suggest. "We don't want to spoil your system." But they insist on making room for us anyway, even though they're on practically the last sheets, and we each collate a full copy, apart from Peter-Fred who finds himself short one back cover.

The registration pack includes a useful list of eating places, and I decide that food might be a good idea. On our way out, we bump into an incoming Moshe Feder, straight off the plane from New York, sans Lise

who is ill. We agree to wait for him while he rushes off with his normal New York energy to book into his room and say hello to the convention. We eat Indonesian and give Moshe a blow by blow account of what I've seen and done since he left me and Lilian eating hot fudge sundaes in Times Square.

Back at the con suite, the hospitality is in full swing. All this free booze would never work at a British convention, I muse. It'd bankrupt the con committee in one night. There are also fresh vegetables to nibble, a box full of apples and a plate of ripe peaches (yum! No, I didn't eat them all!). Lucky for them they got me as TAFF delegate, rather than champion Lambrusco-drinking artist Martin Tudor, I reflect.

I ask Taral how his DUFF campaign is going. "What campaign?" he asks gloomily. He seems to be having his doubts. "I'm no good at talking to people I don't know," he explains. "I mean what do you say?" "I don't know." He then spends ten minutes talking quite fluently about American/Canadian history. "But that doesn't count. It's all right when you're interested in the subject." I decide that Taral would probably do all right in Australia, even if he doesn't drink lager.

I give out my last remaining copies of *Caprician 3*, kicking myself for not remembering to tell Peter-Fred to bring some more to America with him when he came. Colin Hinz, in an amazing T-shirt, just pips Bill Bowers for the last copy, and when I give him the copy of *TNH 11* I hadn't sent earlier because I didn't have his new address, World War III almost broke out between him and Michael Skeet (Canada's ace reporter, first encountered mugging Taral for his DUFF nominees at registration). "More back numbers tomorrow," I promise, and then get intercepted by Moshe with an even more unusual request. "Could you take a coca cola sign back to New York for me?" he asks with eager innocence. I look around desperately for Peter-Fred, while Moshe explains that it should probably fit on the back seat – if we're lucky. "But we weren't going to bring the car in tomorrow," I stall. "I'll pay for the parking," Moshe promises, dragging me over towards Taral. I catch Peter-Fred's eye and the negotiations begin. Apparently, Moshe bought the sign ages ago on one of his previous trips to Canada, and it has been stored at Taral's place ever since, awaiting some mugs with a car, willing to take it back to the States. "What on earth shall we say to customs?" I wonder. But P-F is sanguine. We'll manage. And Moshe is so keen to get the sign integrated into his collection we don't have the heart to refuse. And at least it will save us coming in on the GO train the next day.

The sign is truly huge. It's the first thing we see as we rush into the

hotel for the opening ceremony (yes, two pages into the con rep and they haven't had the opening ceremony yet). Did we really agree to transport this thing? Surely not. Moreover it is thoroughly wrapped in black bin-liner so it could be *anything*.

"Did you know we're sharing this hotel with a meeting for friends of the schizophrenics?" I ask Peter-Fred. It said so on the notice downstairs.

Mike Glicksohn opens the proceedings with his normal bonhomie. "There are only two T-shirts left, and they're both extra-large." I wonder if we should buy one for the coke sign, but don't imagine Moshe will let it wear one. Mike also explains the philosophy of Ditto, which is not as I had previously thought, to allow people to buy designer Taral T-shirts, but to provide an alternative fanzine convention in some place where Corflu hadn't been held that year. Gary Mattingly bids to hold the next one in San Francisco. "Any alternative bids?" asks Glicksohn. "Bristol, maybe, Christina?" "No, we'll bid for the one after," I joke. The weekend after the Dutch Worldcon, I think, then there'll be plenty of Americans around. The idea of holding an American fanzine convention in Britain really appeals to me; but will it count as the other side if the 1990 Corflu is held in New York? Before I can pursue the thoughts any further, Taral is on stage, announcing the scavenger hunt, and appealing for quiz teams. Moshe volunteers, and so does Colin Hinz, but filling up the rest of the places is slow work. I excuse myself on the grounds that all the questions are going to be American, and accompany Peter-Fred to pursue the rumour of cakes and bagels in the con suite.

When I get back they're knee deep in a debate about who blackballed Dave Langford from some Canadian apa. I settle down, realizing that although the quiz has, like all the programme items, only been budgeted for half an hour, it could quite easily run all day. And probably would have, except that David Palter, evidently thinking the same, makes a plea for some semblance of time-keeping. Taral reluctantly puts away his huge pile of remaining questions, Moshe's team is declared the winner (despite some complaints about the relative fairness of the questions from Mike Glicksohn on the opposing team), and personnel are assembled for the next panel. This Glicksohn does by simply calling people from the audience till he is comfortably surrounded. This time I don't get out of it, and go and join the team at the front. Soon I am battling with a feeling of deja vu – didn't I have this discussion at the Worldcon on the Future of Fanzines panel? Or was it the one on the Economics of Egoboo? I conclude that whatever the title of the panel, two things will be discussed: the theory that fanzines are not as important in fandom as they once were and the

impossibility of getting twiltone paper. I can't really relate to this American hang-up over fuzzy paper – so long as the paper doesn't stick to the mimeo drum and yields legible copies, what the hell does it matter? But I get the impression that half of American fanzine fandom is prepared to give up in disgust if they can't have their twiltone. No wonder potential new recruits find this all somewhat alien. I begin to get impatient with the endlessly futile discussion on how to recruit new fanzine enthusiasts. To me, it's not a matter of spoon-feeding, advertising and competing with the other media; it's not about preserving our fannish heritage – it's about us, we who are here now, caring and having the enthusiasm to put in the creative effort. If fanzines are a good place to be, people will find them. If they're brain-dead, or living thirty years in the past, no amount of exposure will attract anybody.

The next panel, aptly enough, is an accusatory session. Taral goes round taking excuses from former fanzines producers as to why they don't pub their ish any more. The conclusion seems to be Mike Glicksohn's aptly put M&Ms – marriage and mortgages. It must be true, I think to myself. I've only put out one fanzine since I got married, compared to 22 before. But I guess there's still time. Bob Webber gives a slightly disjointed airing to the electronic fanac argument, and then it's my turn to get up on stage and talk about TAFF. Giving talks is not my favourite activity, but this one's okay. People fire questions, and I answer them. Hey, this is quite good, I begin to think. I get to have my say, and they all listen. I can talk about consumer fans, and they all think it's a neat expression I invented. If this goes on much longer, I'll get to thinking I'm important or something. By the time they've finished with me, the programme is well overrunning, and we decide to postpone the TAFF auction till after everyone has eaten. The joys of a single-stream underprogrammed convention – you can actually do these things. I like it, we have a group feeling here, not a monolithic organization, planned to the nth, ready to bulldoze across the mood of the moment in the name of logistics. Maybe I will run the Bristol Ditto after all.

Moshe has got together a party to eat at a local Mexican restaurant. It's quite an expedition to get there, those of us too lazy to walk have to take a combination of subway and streetcar, relying on our native guides to supply such arcana as tokens and transfers. Once the party of twelve or so has reunited at the restaurant, it becomes clear that certain among them are suffering from preconceptions. It has just changed hands, and Hope keeps talking about the things they used to have on the menu. Meanwhile, Moshe is sidling up to the waiter and asking what has become of the coke

machine owned by the previous management. Hope takes out her frustrations by telling the waiter that the salsa isn't hot enough. I have a theory that the new owners don't actually want to run a Mexican restaurant at all. It's what they inherited, but already they have integrated some Caribbean dishes to the menu, added strawberry to the margaritas and failed to teach their staff how to pronounce "chimichangas". On this basis, I order Caribbean, chicken jerk, and don't regret it. In fact, it's probably the first meal I've finished in a week. But that might just be indicative of the slowness of the service.

Catherine Crockett has to rush away to prepare for the auction, while the rest of us sit around saying things like "They can't start without us, we're half their potential income." In fact we nearly don't make it away from the restaurant at all when we find ourselves ten dollars short, despite painstaking calculations by Moshe – only to be saved by David Palter emerging from the restroom to ask how much he owed. Coincidentally, ten dollars.

We're right. The auction doesn't start without us. Velma Bowen and Mark Richards are still sorting out lots when we come in, and it has been put back half an hour. Mike Glicksohn gives a demonstration of how it should be done, effortlessly selling off some of his own personal books and fanzines for Ditto. Then it's up to me and Catherine to rally the troops for TAFF. I volunteer to auction the British material, if only because I know more about most of it than anybody else in the room. I still find myself waving things in the air, saying: "You should get this, it's really good stuff," then failing to find anything to prove it to the sceptical audience. Convincing them that they are really missing out by not buying Anne Hammill is hard work; selling the lyrics for the Ian Sorensen rock opera "Neo" almost pathetically easy. Owen Whiteoak is impossible to sort out; I am so bogged down in his ever-changing titles that I totally fail to notice that I've just sold a new issue of *Kamera Obskura* that I haven't seen myself. In the end, we decide we've fleeced the audience for as much as they can stand, Catherine gives me my share of the loot and I go off to the Con Suite for a much earned drink. By this time, I'm glad Moshe persuaded us to bring the car into town – it means we can sit around talking, helping Mark Richards eat his birthday cakes and discovering that people with names like Covert Beach really existed, without having to worry about the train times.

Eventually though, remembering how much driving we will have to do the next day, I start saying my goodbyes. This takes a long time, what with failing to think of a good one-liner for the convention one-shot and

embarking on my first real conversation with Colin Hinz (hey, this is interesting – why didn't we start this earlier?). I don't want to go, or rather, want to come back the next day. I don't want my TAFF trip to be almost over. I want to carry on travelling, meeting new people, intersecting with old ones. I want to hold onto the feeling of connection I've had out of Ditto. But I can't; I'm flying out from New York in two days, and all that will be left will be the fanzines. But perhaps, in the end, that's all you need from a fanzine convention.

Balloons over Bristol #2, October 1988

1989: Robert Lichtman

Robert Lichtman attended Contrivance in St Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands, the 1989 British Eastercon. The rival candidate was Luke McGuff. Robert Lichtman died in 2022.

Platform

Bob was a prolific fanwriter and publisher from the late 1950s and 60s, in fanzines like *Psi-Phi* and *Frap*. After a decade's retirement, he had a name transplant, returning as "Robert" in the 1980s. His fanzine *Trap Door* was instantly popular, featuring and appealing to fans of all eras and locations, and helping to lure back other retired fans. His involvement with British fandom makes him the obvious TAFF delegate. Since all who meet him stress his enjoyable, friendly conversation he is bound to prove a popular winner. Even if, after all these years, he *still* hasn't learned to number every page.*

Robert Lichtman's nominators are: Linda Blanchard & Dave Bridges, Hazel Ashworth, Lucy Huntzinger, Dave Langford, and Suzanne Tompkins.

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* Robert Lichtman's platform was written by Owen Whiteoak. *[Ed.]*

Doorway

Robert Lichtman

When I came back from my TAFF trip, a huge stack of mail was waiting. Even after I threw out the junk mail, there were still ten fanzines (in addition to the dozen or so new zines handed to me while in England), a dozen letters (most of them LoCs), some FAPA dues payments and other business, and a whole flock of orders in response to the "fanzines by the pound" advertisements that the editors of *Locus* and *SFC* had generously run gratis for TAFF. It worked out that I received paid orders for more than twice as many fanzines as I had available. One person sent a check for fifty pounds! After filling as many orders as possible – smallest ones first in order to spread the zines as widely as possible (never got near the fifty-pounder!) – I had to return quite a few orders with a letter of apology. In addition, there were several apa deadlines to meet and, before many weeks had passed, a FAPA Secretary-Treasurer's report to prepare.

I was fanning my butt off in an effort to stay on top of the huge wave of fannish energy that I'd brought in off the road with me. Also, at odd moments my mind would boil over with instant replays of various portions of my trip. I let it out somewhat by writing a fairly brief report for a very small apa in which I participate, mostly just a loose chronology of my travels and bare bones reportage; later, I expanded on one day (the one I spent with a non-fan friend in Cambridge) in my FAPAzine. Altogether I wrote about 8,000 words, making no reference whatsoever to my two hours of taped notes (which I *still* have not played, wanting to save them for when I Get Serious about writing my report). As summer heated up, I allowed myself to enter without guilt into my annual summer slump. This is usually caused by the weather; it gets too hot to sit in my room over a keyboard for anything other than the bare minimum of maintenance fanac. I believe I combined this slump with a belated post-trip one, for by the time it finally struck it was impossible to say whether weather or post-TAFF letdown was the cause. But whatever, I have not worked further on that pre-report since the end of July. If anyone is interested in seeing what I've written so far, send me a $2 donation to TAFF and a long SASE, and I'll run one off for you. If you like, I'll also include a copy of a six-page list of fanzines and other items for sale to benefit TAFF. For anyone

wanting only the sale list, it is available for a long SASE (overseas send an IRC instead).

My three weeks in the U.K. were *(insert your own pet superlative)*. While this is not going to lead into any sort of serious trip report – it's too soon for that – I can't just let this editorial slide on by without restating my belief that fannish institutions like TAFF *do* work and are for the people involved (as well as for fandom as a whole) well worth the risk and hard work involved beyond the glory days of the trip itself. (To explain, the risk is that, in running, one puts oneself in place as a public target for any possible surprise potshots or downright nastiness from anyone so inclined; the work is in administering your half of the fund after your trip is over and the coma Roger refers to may have set in.)

In my own case, the prospect of finally getting to meet the people who have been in and on my mind for up to thirty years was the stuff of sheer fantasy; that's what buoyed my spirits through the months of Being a Candidate. To have it actually happen was overwhelmingly fulfilling.

The truth of the old adage "All knowledge is contained in fanzines" really hits home when you travel around a familiar yet strange new land and meet, visit, and live a little of your life with people who previously were only names at another end of the fannish nexus. Although it is all new, it is also quite familiar. You've been there in your mind already. Of course, sometimes reality and the contents of your imagination can clash. For instance, as a youngfan in the late '50s, I imagined ATom's residence, at 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, to be an elderly red brick low-rise apartment block situated in a verdant, park-like setting, amidst stately oaks, rose gardens and manicured hedges, in a cul-de-sac with no traffic. One would leave one's car in a nearby parking area and stroll through the formal gardens to Arf's front door. Of course, in my neoish dreams I couldn't ever work out whether he lived on the ground floor or up a flight of stairs. But the address itself was exotic to me. In reality, Chuch and Sue Harris and I ascended to the Thomsons' apartment on a lift. The building was not red brick. I don't remember much greenery. Damn good to see Art again, though (only other time was in '64 during *his* TAFF trip), and meet Olive, a dynamo of energy who brews a mean pot of tea and kept us plied with sweets and good conversation.

Many other disparities between illusion and reality come to mind, but the most interesting are the cultural features you didn't even think of. For instance, I knew that in the U.K. one drives on the left side of the road in cars with the driver's seat on the right side, but I was completely unaware of the use of roundabouts (traffic circles) for the junctions of arterial roads.

The joys of “freshly cut” sandwiches (as opposed to ones embalmed in plastic wrappings) and pub food were brought home to me. There were whole categories of stores mostly non-existent in post-industrial America but in evidence in generous quantities wherever I went: little news agents, bakeries and betting parlors. Another surprise was how old and new architecture was all situated together, just like in America. My mental picture was that the old stuff would be in separate places, to enhance its historicity. Juxtapositions like the modern buildings at one edge of the centuries-old Cambridge open market were constant mind-bogglers. I don’t know *why* I thought it would be different.

One of the fringe benefits of being a TAFF delegate is that you can generally move between feuding elements of the host fandom without rancor on anyone’s part. Often I felt like a Heinleinesque “fair witness” as I spent time with various of the warring factions and got to hear their respective viewpoints of the battle lines of British fandom. Preferring mostly to socialize and sightsee, when interfan hassles were discussed, I usually just listened – to scope out for myself (if possible) the truth (ever shifting and often elusive) of the various positions I’d previously seen espoused in fanzines. When I occasionally commented, it was mostly in a general way, trying my best not to take sides. Sometimes this was challenging, but I felt (and feel) that I can be a more effective commentator than participant if I’m equally informed by all parties. In retrospect, the main thing I regret about 1989’s version of the good ol’ fan feud (I’ve never enjoyed feuds – they are not among my reasons for participating in fandom) is the apparent loss of Owen Whiteoak, one of my favorite fanwriters throughout the ’80s who also turned out to be a Good Person when I finally met him. If there was anything I could have said or done that would have helped to prevent that particularly unhappy turn of events, I’m sorry to have overlooked it.

Well, life does go on despite these setbacks, and TAFF is continuing in its appointed ways, too. This year, since the Worldcon is in the Netherlands it will be *the* convention most European fans will attend that time of year. This fact has resulted, despite much canvassing by the Twins and me, in an overwhelming lack of candidates interested in going the following weekend to a Nasfic in Southern California. Therefore, Christina, Lilian and I decided (after also soliciting the opinion of a wide range of TAFF founders and former administrators in order to broaden the consensus) last fall that there would be no 1990 TAFF race. The next race will be from Europe to North America for the 1991 Worldcon. This summer, in my first TAFF newsletter, the schedule for that race – from

opening nominations to announcing the result – will be published. There will also be fannish items for sale and up for auction (mostly fanzines – one particular oddity to be offered is a small collection of *riders* that accompanied various issues of *Slant*). (Contributions of auctionable items, by the way, are always in order.) The newsletter will go to TAFF's rather large mailing list, which will include all North American and Southern Hemisphere *Trap Door* readers, since they are within the sphere of activity of a "North American TAFF administrator." (A few Europeans, primarily newszine editors and former TAFF administrators, will also get it, and others need only apply.) Watch for it.

Trap Door #9, January 1990

Report in Progress

Robert Lichtman

What follows is a very provisional, off the cuff, strictly from memory account (more a chronology with little extra bits put in) of my TAFF trip. But first: Before the trip itself, I began keeping a computer diary of the stuff that happened starting from when I heard I'd won the trip:

January 16 When I came home from work this evening, there was a lengthy message from Jeanne Gomoll on my answering machine. She advised me that I won TAFF handily (something like 2½-1 in the overall popular vote) and would call again. I phoned up Paul Williams and told his answering machine. I also called up Jeanne Bowman and let her know.

January 17 I let people know at work today that I'd indeed won the trip of which I'd been speaking all these months. A good reception there. Jeanne Gomoll called again at about 8:40 p.m. She told me she would be sending me a package shortly with a folder of TAFF history and customs prepared by P&T and a check for at least $1,000 so I could get started on making my arrangements. She said the rest of the fund would follow after she closed out its books on her end. The fund now totals around $3,800, she informed me, prior to closing out the books. She made $2,000 on the mail auction. Later she will send me five boxes of leftover TAFF auction stuff. She filled me in on some of the ongoing baggage TAFF is carrying: controversy in the U.K. over which convention venue a TAFF delegate should attend. I guess I started this one with my Eastercon/Mexicon talk last year. Also raised the question of where a TAFF winner should go in 1990. The worldcon will be in Holland that year and presumably full of Americans without any TAFF winner. Should TAFF winner go to a British convention or what? Sticky part of this is that some European fans have been feeling disgruntled about what they consider Brit domination of European half of TAFF. However, no Europeans voted in this race. Blah blah blah. I'll sort all this out later.

January 19 Hour long call from Lucy Huntzinger, who asks first if I won TAFF. Tells me some stuff regarding weather in U.K. that time of year. Also informs me of Chuch Harris's fall and new steel pin, and of ATom being in hospital due out about now. Hope he's going to be okay. I'd really like to meet him.

January 22 Surprised by a phone call at about 11:00 a.m. from one of the European TAFF administrators, Christina Lake, who congratulates me and asks me what I want to do about various travel and convention things. She agrees to make travel arrangements for me from London to Jersey and back, to make hotel and convention arrangements, to let people know I'm vegetarian.

January 23 Money order for $1,000 received today from Jeanne Gomoll, who briefly writes that 5 boxes and a tube of TAFF sale stuff is also on its way via UPS. A pink slip in my box: probably the TAFF folder from Jeanne. Now that I'm bankrolled, I'm going to fill out my passport application tonight and get that rolling.

January 24 Picked up the TAFF folder at the P.O. on the way to work, leaving it unopened all day on the floor of the car. At lunch, went in and applied for my passport. After dinner, opened package eagerly and spent several hours going through it all. Patrick & Teresa did a wonderful job of gathering up a good chunk of TAFF history, including sections from Harry Warner Jr.'s history of the '50s, Fancy II, and even Ted White's article about TAFF from (whenever it was). Needs to have Greg Pickersgill's article from *Stop Breaking Down* ca. 1980 added.

January 25 The TAFF sale stuff arrived today. I managed to intercept the UPS driver before he brought it all in the lobby of the office and plunked it into the back of the car. In the evening, all other fanac (and everything else) is off after dinner while I open and sort through the five boxes (10-ream paper box size). Most of it is fanzines and about half of them are unnoteworthy or commonly available. These fill nearly two of the boxes, which then go to the bottom of the stack. Two other boxes get filled, rather fuller, with what's left: mostly more fanzines (including some old apa mailings of dubious value in my opinion but Jeanne Gomoll said they'd supposedly valuable to "the right people," whoever that might be), but also the famous Brighton sugar teeth, Conspiracy two-tone pen, a Nolacon 2 Staff t-shirt (size large), and other odds and ends. There are a handful of books and magazines of mostly dubious value. A full box of stuff gets offed: photocopied galley proofs of books by unknown authors which probably never sold and which were offered for bargain basement prices in the JGTaff catalog (and didn't sell) hit the dumpster for tomorrow's trash pick up. Other paperbacks, including bound uncorrected galley proofs of books that are similar to the unbound ones mentioned above, and including a good selection of French stf books by prominent American authors (Agberg, Benford, Asimov, etc.), get put into the fifth box and back into the rear of the car to take to Santa Rosa to the used book

store tomorrow. The last fanzines of the evening are the *Egoboo*s that didn't sell from JGTaff. Since these contain numerous mentions of me and even a letter or two from me, I relax by reading through them. It's satisfying to have five boxes of kipple sorted. As to the two boxes of unnotable fanzines, I intend to try to get them off to Noreascon or some other major convention to be offered on a sale table for donations. Thanks to a call from Peggy Pavlat earlier in the evening about other matters, I learn that Mike Glyer is my contact person for pulling this off. I will write him soon.

January 26 Took the books to the used book store in downtown Santa Rosa during lunch. They took all the French ones and a handful of others. Net income for TAFF of $7.00. This is the first money TAFF has made during my administration. Though an inauspicious start, the fact that it's so soon bodes well. Brought the other books home and will try them at OCoH in due course.

January 29 Conceived the idea of selling off the two boxes of miscellaneous fanzines by writing up an ad, camera-ready, for *Locus*, *SFC* and *File 770*, offering to sell miscellaneous fanzines by the pound, proceeds to benefit TAFF. Wrote to Glyer, Porter and Brown about running ad for fanzines by the pound, sending the ad along with the letters.

February 4 Received from Jeanne Gomoll: her final financial report and a certified check for $2,523.34.

February 7 Picked up air and rail tickets at CSAA today: $950.00. $611 for air and $339 for rail. Hoohaw! We go! I send a letter to Lilian and Christina about my travel arrangements and other matters.

February 15 A letter from Christina today reporting my travel arrangements to and from the convention. I leave from Heathrow on Friday the 24th at 0805 and return on Monday the 27th to Gatwick at 2035. I'm writing her again tonight acknowledging this and discussing when to visit Bristol.

This particular diary leaves off here. In the month between February 15th and my departure date of March 18th, I engaged in considerable trans-Atlantic correspondence arranging an itinerary of people to see and places to go. While I was actually on the trip, I recorded a total of about two hours of tapes filling myself in on a daily basis as to the outline of the day and noteworthy events that occurred. I haven't played that back yet, so what follows is strictly from memory and lacks a level of detail that will be later filled in for the full report.

March 18 Plane out of San Francisco later afternoon via Seattle to London. A highly uncomfortable seat (minimal leg room), very packed

flight especially after Seattle. One good thing: before the flight I'd been told by various travel agents and British Air staff people that no exit was allowed from the plane when it stopped in Seattle. This turned out not to be true, so I had a whole twenty minutes. I phoned up Kristi Austin (daughter of old-time Seattle fan William Austin) at her bookstore and spoke with her and with Jerry Kaufman. Eventually I had to go back to the plane and they (and others also there) had to leave to go see "Baron Munchausen," and we were soon once again in the sky. General excitement about being on my way kept me from getting more than 1½-2 hours of sleep during the flight. By being on the wrong side of the airplane, I missed seeing some northern lights that were announced at one point. British Air vegetarian airline food was actually fairly palatable.

March 19 Arrived in London at around 1:30 p.m. their time (5:30 a.m. California time). Met at airport by Rob Hansen, Avedon Carol, Owen Whiteoak, Dave and Hazel Langford, and Martin Smith, and off on the London Underground to Piccadilly Circus and Covent Garden (except for Langfords, who return to Reading), where had first meal in England at a crepes house in a cellar below Covent Garden. I have asparagus and cheese crepes; the asparagus is canned and the cheese is a white medium cheddar. But they are large, topped with lavish handful of cress sprouts, and fairly tasty. Then taken by Underground out to East Ham (Rob and Avedon's house) where I based myself during most of my ensuing time in London. I am glad to land and stop schlepping my huge (and to get huger) bag around. I stay up until around 1:00 a.m. their time and don't wake up again until around 2:00 p.m. the following day. I guess that's serious jet lag, eh?

March 20 A selective walking tour of London with Rob Hansen. This starts out being the fannish walking tour, past various pubs in which the London Circle has met over the decades (some of which are no longer pubs – one is, fittingly, a computer store), various other fan residences and hotels, including the Bonnington in which TAFF was thought up in 1953. After this, we walked past the street on which the evial Margaret Thatcher lives. I would hear much during my visit to the U.K. about the evils this woman has wrought, and how she is not constrained by the sort of "checks and balances" we enjoy in the U.S. We also went past Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace and other more conventional tourist attractions. This was followed by getting lost trying to find Denbigh Street, where we did finally have dinner with Avedon (who shows up from work), Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna in an Indian restaurant across the street from their flat that evening. Returning home to East Ham from that, I stayed up

talking with Avedon at the kitchen table until 3:30 a.m. Still adjusting to Mean Time.

March 21 Off by train (travelling 125 MPH!!!) to Bristol to visit with Peter-Fred and Christina. Because I got to Paddington Station too late to call ahead (as I'd agreed to do), I buy a phone card (used for so many message units per card and purchased at numerous outlets) and call from the train. Because of my need to use the phones, which are available only in the first class seating, I simply stayed where I'd landed, supposedly only temporarily, in the first class area. Even when my ticket was checked later on, I wasn't required to move out. It is a pleasure to get out of London and see some actual countryside. Christina met me at the train station as we'd arranged and I got into my first British car and was driven down my first British street. Eek! It feels Very Different. More Indian food that evening (takeaway this time instead of going out) and visiting with Peter-Fred, Christina and Mike Christie, who comes around.

March 22 Peter-Fred and Christina lend me their car for the day and I go out on British roadways – driving on the "wrong" side of the road and learning rapidly about "roundabouts," or traffic circles. Even on the big motorways (the equivalent of our freeways) most junctions of major roads are by these roundabouts, not by divided, multi-level cloverleafs (these latter mostly exist on their equivalent of the U.S. Interstates, the "M" series roads). Takes some getting used to. I head out to a remote section of Wales (Llangorse, in the Brecon Beacons area) to visit Mike Christie, who is living in a 120-year-old house in a town of about 100 people. On the way, stop at various laybys (rest areas) and take pictures of scenery. Also get thirsty and stop in small, picturesque town of Crickhowell to buy something to drink. More pictures. Soon after arriving, Mike walks me across the street and down about 100 feet to a local establishment, where I am introduced to pub food (I have a lentil and buckwheat "crumble") and the local homebrew, which is excellent – the best of my entire trip! Later, climb a tall hill in high wind to get pictures of the lake and farmland below. The winds are at least 70-80 miles per hour and buffet me around a lot. I escape the full brunt of them wherever possible by being over the edge of the hill. An ice storm cuts short my ascent, but I *do* get the pictures before it hits. (I can *hear* it coming in from the west.) On the way back, to break up the trip, stop in Welsh town of Abergavenny and walk around the central town area. Find a Safeway with Glen Ellen wines on sale. Safeways don't seem very Welsh to me; it's a surprise to run into one. By the time I make it back to Bristol, I feel pretty comfortable on the roads. I'm in Bristol rush hour, but it's mostly all going the other way. That

evening, Peter-Fred cooks his own version of Indian food for dinner. It is quite good. Christina and Peter-Fred take me to a pub in an area of Bristol near the bus station. There I meet for the first time the legendary Dave Wood, a well known and popular BAFF. (Does Lilapa know the term? In "mainstream" fanzine fandom in the earlier '80s, many long disappeared fans returned to activity, both here and in the U.K. Over there the lot became known as **B**orn **A**gain **F**ifties **F**ans, thus the acronym.) There are other local fans there, but I've not listened to my tapes yet so their names, if recorded, are so far unrecorded in print. A good evening. My first and second pub visits in Britain in the same day. How different they were.

March 23 Take train back to London and then take the Underground out to South Ealing station to spend the evening with Greg and Linda Pickersgill. I am staying the night there because it's closer to the airport for an early morning flight to Jersey, Channel Islands, for the convention I am to attend, and mostly because I want to spend an evening visiting with Greg and Linda, whom I got to know a little when they were in San Francisco on their TAFF trip. When I got there, Greg was there alone, cooking a prawn gumbo for dinner. With my permission, he added some cod as well to stretch it a little further, as a few other possible dinner candidates were in the offing. Alun Harries and Abi Frost eventually did come around during the evening, the former getting so totally pissed that late in the evening he lurches around so that we are concerned for his safety. This is caused by a steady succession of pints of lager followed late at night by his breaking out a sizable lump of some excellent hash and continuing to light rounds of it until I begged him off. "It worked, it worked!" was about the way I put it. He finally puts himself to bed and when I go up to the adjoining room later, I hear him groaning and tossing. After that, Greg, Linda and I all agree that it's been an extraordinary evening, but as we mostly have to be up in the early morning, we call it a night around 1:30 a.m.

March 24-27 Fly to Jersey, getting to the airport around 7:00 a.m. for a flight scheduled for shortly after 8:00. Jersey is one of the Channel Islands, located about 150 miles south of London and only 15 miles from the French Coast. A 35-minute flight, but it's delayed 50 minutes (!) in departing because the Heathrow Airport computer is down. The convention is in the Hotel de France, the largest hotel on Jersey located in Jersey's largest town, St. Helier, up on a hill overlooking the town. During the convention, I manage to get away several of the days to visit places like Elizabeth Castle, the Occupation Museum (the Channel Islands were the only British territory occupied by the Nazis during WW2), and many

walks around the neighborhoods and shopping districts to stretch my legs after serious conventioneering. The convention itself is quite enjoyable in its own unassuming way. At over 1,000 registered, it's the second largest Eastercon ever. (Does anyone here not know that the Eastercon is British fandom's annual "national" convention?) Over 850 were in attendance. There were multiple tracks of programming, a sales room (thankfully mostly books), an art show I never got to see (the times I tried, it was locked), a fan room of sizable proportions with excellent displays, and two bars, one of them directly across the hallway from the fan room and which never closed, to my knowledge, during the entire convention. I was told by one of the hotel staff that, except for a few "permanent guests," the entire hotel had been turned over to the convention. It was a Victorian hotel, strangely reminiscent of Berkeley's Hotel Claremont. Among these 850 there were perhaps 30-40 fanzine fans and people who fellow travel with fanzine fans, including some more well known as conrunners. This gave me a steady variety of company to keep. Of the convention itself I don't wish to make a full report beyond that it was, as I said above, pleasantly enjoyable. Even the banquet was good, so good in fact that the chef was brought out to a standing ovation. On early Monday evening, fly back to London, this trip to Gatwick Airport. Take the Gatwick Express train to Victoria Station. Exiting Victoria Station I walk around a little bit to see what restaurants are in the area. There are two Indian establishments. I didn't have any Indian food while in Jersey, though there were a number of Indian restaurants, so I am *ready*. I compare their menus, choose one of the restaurants, and have an excellent vegetable biryani with half a pint of lager. Thus satisfied, I catch the Underground to East Ham.

March 28: Because I'd arrived back in London quite late the previous evening from the Eastercon (held on Jersey in the Channel Islands, 14 miles off the coast of France), I ended up sleeping in rather late. In the dwindling moments of this Monday morning, on a sunny, clear day in London, I caught a train to Cambridge to visit with Duffy, an old friend from my university days. (We saw each other for the first time since 1968 when she visited Berkeley in 1987.) (A few readers may remember her as the tall, slender but not skinny lady with long, straight dark hair I brought to one of the Southern California Westercons of the late 1960s.) Forgetting what I'd been repeatedly told – that it's always somewhat warmer in London because of a temperature inversion – I went off wearing only a medium-weight flannel shirt and unlined Levi jacket. As the train headed towards Cambridge, the skies clouded up (I had brought along my umbrella having learned my lesson on several occasions back in London

before going off to Jersey) and it turned breezy. It was sprinkling lightly, off and on, by the time I arrived in Cambridge. Duffy met me at the station in a left-hand drive VW Jetta! As we drove away and I commented on this, she said that she'd had it brought over from California years ago. It felt weird to be in such a car in the U.K. She took me to see various cathedrals and universities in and around Cambridge. This included a lengthy stop at King's College Chapel, an architectural wonder amply supplied with huge stained glass windows. We took in an exhibit explaining the amazing engineering design of the building and the nature of some of the materials of which it is constructed (huge virgin oak beams). The display went into considerable detail about the difficulty of doing restoration.

It soon was early afternoon and we began speaking seriously of lunch. Along the way, Duffy conducted a little necessary banking business. (Though I don't recall specifics, the way the banks went about their business seemed a little different than in the U.S.) The bank was adjacent to the Cambridge open market. This was the first of a number of such markets I was to see during my stay in the U.K. One could buy all manner of bulk and packaged food, from spring onions to fresh fish, as well as a variety of other non-food items including clothing. Because I was underdressed (it was definitely colder and windier than in London, and more rain looked threatening) I ventured into the market to find a teeshirt to augment my wardrobe. I located a stylish gray Cambridge University teeshirt, purchased it, and put it on right there. (It later became a present for my oldest son, Ben, who seems to treasure it. At least, he wears it frequently.) Duffy humorously pretended not to know me temporarily while I stripped off my flannel shirt, put on the teeshirt, and put back on my flannel shirt and Levi jacket. Ah, warmth!

We had lunch at a Mexican restaurant located in a newish shopping area not far from the open market. My London friends had warned me about Mexican restaurants in London (not that there are many) so I was somewhat suspicious of having Mexican food. But since Duffy is a native Californian, I knew she wouldn't lead me astray. To my great enjoyment and relief, the food was very good. I had chimichangas stuffed with mushrooms sautéed in white wine. It was excellent. (For those who may be nonconversant in the many varieties of Mexican food, I should explain that a chimichanga is essentially a lightly deep-fried burrito, its flour tortilla outer shell thus rendered somewhat crunchy but not crispy.)

After lunch we went walking around the colleges some more. Because she is a student there, Duffy was able to take me to some areas I wouldn't otherwise be permitted to see. After a while, at her suggestion,

we rented a punt boat for a ride up and down the River Cam in the "back yards" of the various colleges. Since I am no water person, I let Duffy do all the punting – she's good at it, though she says she hasn't done it for five years. In addition to seeing a lot of impressive buildings and some attractive landscaping, we got to go under a number of old stone bridges. Some were quite low over the river and we could reach up and touch the undersides. One was called the Bridge of Sighs, though I haven't a clue as to why. After about 20 minutes we stopped because the weather was getting colder and more rain was strongly threatening and because her hands were breaking out in a rash. We discussed this and decided it was from polluted Cam water soaked up by the porous wood of the punt stick.

Leaving the river and the area of the colleges, we walked up some narrow back roads and pedestrian pathways, finally reaching a row of attractive shops. On the wall of one of them was a small sign reading "My Little Tea Room." Duffy recommended it as a good place to go for afternoon tea because it hasn't been discovered by the tourists as yet. To get there, we walked into the door of the building, which took us into a gift shop full of hand stitchery and other home crafts, plus an assortment of cards and note paper. At the rear of the gift shop was an unmarked staircase down to a basement, where the tea room was located. It was moderately full and at first we had to share a table with a couple who were finishing up. Soon they departed and we ordered tea. Each of us also enjoyed a thick, rich slice of a white cake well-drenched in a delicate lemon sauce. Time passed far too quickly but wholly enjoyably as we each spoke of our old times and our new times.

Finally it became time to pick up her daughter, Clare, from a farm outside of Cambridge. The ride was doubly enjoyable to me, for anticipation of seeing Clare again (she was now six and had been just four when I first met her in 1987) and because I got to see more countryside from a closer and slower vantage point than a train. Clare remembered me and when we arrived back at their home, she asked me upstairs to see the doll house that was being built into a former fireplace space in a wall of her room. Somewhat later we all had tea together and afterwards Clare climbed up in my lap and quietly cuddled while Duffy and I conversed some more. For someone who has four boys, this was new and nice.

Eventually it became time to leave, since Duffy had a prior engagement that evening. We all piled into her car again and drove me back to the train station. Back to London and then out to East Ham for the evening. At this point, one thing I'm beginning to notice is that Britain seems a lot cleaner from the roads than it does from the trains. Although

the trains were a marvelous convenience and ran pretty much on time and frequently, the tracks seem to be bordered by dump site, repair yards, side tracks full of decaying and/or damaged coaches, and stacks of spare track and gravel. The London Underground, where it's not down in a tunnel, is much the same way, only even grottier. I certainly can't make any claims for America being any better in this regard. However, I tend to expect Americans to be slobs, but not (in my mental fantasy) orderly Brits. So much for my long-held image of a tidy Britain.

March 29 Train to Northampton, where I'm met by Chuch & Sue Harris. As expected, I recognize Chuch instantly from ATom cartoons of him over the years. They ask for permission to stop and get some groceries at the local superstore, a Tesco's. I gladly accede since this will be my first and perhaps only opportunity to see a British supermarket, as opposed to corner groceries, convenience stores and news agents, all of which I've already experienced out on walks. It is as large as though it were American and carried a full line of groceries, including many that are semi-strange and alien to me. It was far more exotic than being in the old Berkeley Co-op stores, which in their heyday were the food tripper's paradise. All the items in the produce section are labeled as to country of origin. The oranges were from Israel and Spain, the grapes were *not* from Chile. When we approach the checkstands, two clerks are talking about the upcoming price scanning devices, such as most American grocery stores for several years now. They were going to attend a training session the following week and were afraid of failure. I admitted to my Yankhood and told them how easy it was and how they would never want to go back to hand keying of prices after using scanners. They seem relieved, their apprehension level much reduced. After leaving the store, we drive across the parking lot to the petrol depot where they fill up. Imperial gallons at that station cost £1.70; given the exchange rate and the difference in the size of Imperial and American gallons, this works out to around $2.35 per gallon. But, enough of this digression... That done, we drive out into the countryside. As we cruise along, I see brick stacks protruding from the middle of fields and ask about them. It turns out that there is a canal running through this area, part of which is subterranean. The stacks are air vents. Chuch tells of how canal people make it through these tunnels by laying on the deck of their barge and "walking" along the ceiling of the tunnel. He says there's an old-time saying around there, for canal people, "Don't ever married a one-legged woman." Gross but no doubt true. I see my first thatched roof buildings and have lunch in a thatched roof pub on the banks of the canal. Later, see canal boats pass through the system of locks that moves the

boats from one level to another of the canal. Take many pictures of this and the surroundings. Then drive to Daventry for the evening. Sue sets out an excellent dinner and we spend the evening socializing. At one point, Chuch gets out a run of Quinsy, a sort of fanzine he was doing, for me to look at while he watches *Dallas*. The show is close-captioned (though much is left out), not as common in the U.K. as here.

March 30 In the morning I spend quite some time with Chuch up at his computer, where he speaks and I type. This evolves into our fastest means of communication. The night before he was lip reading me and while he admitted I was a pretty quick and relatively easy read, still it was much slower than typing. Altogether I turn out nearly eight single spaced pages that morning. Late morning, Chuch & Sue drive me to Coventry. On the way we pass a small town where there are still functional stocks in the town square. This is in a town which has the old Roman road, Watling Street, as its main drag. At Coventry, we go to see the reconstructed Coventry cathedral. Most of the cathedral was bombed by the Germans during WW2. One of the parts they didn't get is a 320 foot tower. There's a circular staircase of some 185 steps inside the tower, much of it in near darkness. It costs £1 to make the climb, which I do with Sue; the view from the top is breathtaking. We look down and see Chuch sitting on a bench below, avidly eyeballing a young couple making out on the next bench. "Typical," says Sue. Afterwards, we go past the Lady Godiva statue (Coventry is where she took her famous ride), and I kid Chuch about climbing aboard the statue for a picture. Then off to a pub they know for lunch of quiche, chips, salad and a half-pint. Then Chuch & Sue drive me to the train station, where I catch a train to Leeds. Remembering how the economy class train from Bristol back to London was crowded, and the same class from London to Northampton was fairly uncomfortable, I get into the first class section. The conductor doesn't challenge my presence. I decide that from here on out, wherever possible, I will ride first class. From Leeds, I take a much funkier train to small town of Skipton, on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales. (I am told later that these train coaches are actually old bus bodies which have been put on railroad running gear.) Met at Skipton station by Mal & Hazel Ashworth, who immediately drive me out to a pub called the Craven Heifer in small village of Addingham. Spend the evening there visiting with Mal, Hazel and Don West, who is awaiting us there, trying local brews and enjoying the pub ambience. It's "drawing" night, which means that with every drink one buys one gets a number. At 10:15 they start calling the numbers. Winners pick a slip of paper from a glass, the slip stating the prize. The four of us won three of

the 20 prizes that evening. Mal won a “Genius” pint glass, D. won a Guinness bottle opener and I won a deck of playing cards. Don later left the opener for me.

March 31 Mal, Hazel and I drive across the moors east to the ancient walled city of York, where we walk along a portion of the walls and then down into the narrow medieval streets, including one *very* narrow winding street called “The Shambles.” We visit the open market and Yorkminster Cathedral. (York is second only to Canterbury in the Anglican religion and has its own archbishop.) As is becoming normal, Mal & Hazel also have a favorite pub and we go there for lunch. That evening, after dinner back in Skipton, we drive in to Leeds for a weekly gathering of locals at a hotel near the train station. Don West is there, as is the infamous Michael Ashley (not the one who did *History of the S.F. Pulps* but a new one) and various other Leeds fans to be listed in the Real Report. A good time is had by all. At the end of the evening, Don walks over to me and we stand back to back because Hazel has been curious as to our height differential. I’m about 1½ inches taller. Don tells me he’s interested in writing me an article for *Trap Door* “about fan history,” and asks me when my next deadline might be. Later, on the way out of town, a truck throws up a rock which shatters our windshield. Driving home is like driving through a cathedral window, but manageable. I immediately offer to take over for Mal, who is quite pissed, but he handles it well the whole way. When we get there, Mal lays down for a while and then comes down with folders full of old fanzines, including a very thick one of old Burbee, Laney, Perdue and other Insurgent stuff. He also shows me, for contrast’s sake, a folder full of old Norman G. Wansborough fanzines and a studio portrait of Norman himself. We locate and Mal gives me several duplicates: riders with *Slant*. Talk about obscure! This takes us all nicely away from the broken windscreen trauma. We go to bed late.

April 1 The broken windshield puts a crimp on plans to visit the Yorkshire Dales more extensively (we’d driven along the edges of them on our way back from York). I help Mal smash out the rest of the windshield on their car; then he drives off to Bradford to get it replaced. He is wearing only a teeshirt and light windbreaker, and the weather is only in the low 50’s and threatening rain. Hazel and I point out to him that he may be underdressed, but he cavalierly drives off. (This will not have meaning to all of you, but some of you will understand when I say that Mal Ashworth reminded me very much, both physically and in his manner, of Alan Graham.) Soon after, I walk with Hazel from the little village of Embsay, where they live, about 1½ miles to Skipton, not that big itself. On the way,

we talk of Don West and how he is barely surviving on the dole despite being a brilliant writer and artist. Hazel tells me he's unable to get interested in being a professional and, in fact, when he accepted an illustrating job for *Interzone*, he stalled on it while fulfilling some fannish commitments and turned in artwork far inferior to that which he does for fanzines. After having a snack and tea at the coffee shop of a local store, I get back on the train from Skipton to Leeds, then on the Intercity 125 train (first class, of course!) back to London (Kings Cross Station). Upon arrival, I sightsee a little in the area round Kings Cross, find another Indian restaurant for dinner, and then head out to East Ham for the evening, where the first of two parties held for me that weekend takes place. Party report to follow in the expanded version of this.

April 2 In the afternoon, a KTF (**K**ent **T**ru**F**andom) meeting in my honour. During this one, Chuch & Sue arrive from Daventry and drive me off to see Arthur & Olive Thomson in the Brixton area of London. The reality of the actual 17 Brockham House location is very jarring after thirty years of exotic mental imagery. They live in a stark, '50s council tower building. We visit for an hour or so, limiting ourselves to that long so as not to over-excite Art, who was in hospital for months with complications from emphysema and by no means has a clean bill of health, though he was doing considerably better, even had been reported out driving a few weeks before I arrived. Chuch hadn't seen Art for six months or so. This was the first time I'd seen Art since 1964. For Sue and Olive, it was the first time in around twenty years. Sometimes during this hour we would all be conversing together, but much of the time it was two distinct knots. Olive kept us plied with strong English tea and biscuits. Reluctantly, it became time for us to return to the KTF party. Both coming and going from East Ham to Brixton, we crossed the Thames over Tower Bridge, so named because it's adjacent to the sprawling medieval Tower of London with its turrets and moats. The moats were not filled with water that day. The party continued into the evening. In fact, one portion of it (a Trivial Pursuit game) carried on well after I and my hosts had retired for the night. Trivial Pursuit is hot stuff over there right now. Many London fans seem to play it, and there are signs up in the Underground stations about a 900 number one can call to play for money.

April 3 Sleep in rather late after the intense weekend of traveling and partying. Take the Underground to Heathrow where I catch a shuttle plane to Belfast Airport in Northern Ireland. At Walter's advice, I take a shuttle bus from the airport to Oxford Street Station in downtown Belfast. Outside the airport, there's a checkpoint with a series of speed bumps on the road

and men in uniforms toting sub-machine guns. This brings home that one is in Northern Ireland. I sit next to a middle-aged lady with a lot of luggage. When we arrive at Oxford Street, she asks me for assistance in getting it off the bus. When I have it all off, plus my own, I ask her if she can handle it from here because I have to meet someone. Turning, there is Walter right behind me. He drives me out to their home at Donaghadee. On the way, we drive by Oblique House, where I stop and take a few pictures; then he continues on past Stormont, the seat of the N.I. government, where he used to work. On the edge of Belfast, we pass Scrabo Tower, the all too familiar monolith from *The Enchanted Duplicator*. More pictures from a convenient layby. We detour on old country roads to visit an old castle in a nearby area. When we get there, the main gate is locked, but we go around by way of a driveway and into a side gate which is still open. While we are looking around, a caretaker comes up to us excitedly and says that the place is closed, he's leaving, and we can stay if we don't mind scaling the gate to get out. This is fine with us. Eventually we leave and drive on to Donaghadee, which is on the eastern coast of Northern Ireland, southeast of Belfast. Walter & Madeleine live in a 120-year-old stone Victorian house directly across the street from the beach. The building is a semi-detached villa of gray stone with a slate roof. The name "Strathclyde" appears on the top of the brick and stone pillar at the driveway. A wonderful home-cooked meal is served by Madeleine, and we all spend the evening catching up on what's been happening since we last saw one another in 1962 in America. Walter lends me a copy of his account of their trip to Tropicon last December, which I read in bed before falling off to sleep.

April 4 Walter and I set out by car, taking Max their dog, to visit James & Peggy White, who live on the northern coast of N.I., in the small resort town of Portstewart. We drive through Belfast and then head out on the coast road, which is reminiscent in some ways of Highway 1 here in Northern California. About 15 miles north of Belfast, we stop to visit a medieval castle in a small town, then push onward to another even smaller town, Waterfoot, where we have lunch in a local pub. Walter tells me he was on a holiday in Waterfoot forty years previously and shows me the building in which he stayed. Then we drive on to see the Giants' Causeway, a volcanic formation along the coast which is quite spectacular. Onward from there to Portstewart, passing through Bushmills, where the Irish whisky is made. We visit with Jim & Peggy White for several hours. Peggy serves home-made scones and home-made jams along with tea. James shows us the Commodore 64 (!) on which he does all his writing.

We go for a walk along the oceanfront before driving back to Donaghadee. Altogether we drove 180 miles that day. Northern Ireland is beautiful, reminding me of Kentucky and Tennessee for its greenery and mostly rolling scenery, but with a beach and an occasionally rugged coastline. Another incredible dinner from Madeleine upon our return, including heavenly chocolate mousse. Later we talk some more and watch *Hill Street Blues*. We stay up late. In bed afterwards, I read Walt's Tropicon account again.

April 5 A rainy day. We learn from the television that there's a wildcat Underground strike happening in London that day and the line I'd take from Heathrow Airport to East Ham is not running. After breakfast, Walter drives me first into Donaghadee's shopping area, where I make plane arrangements for my flight back, selecting a flight landing at Gatwick Airport, where I can catch the Express train up to Victoria Station and thus be that much closer to East Ham. We drive over to Bangor, a nearby larger resort town, where I buy some last-minute souvenirs for my kids (tee-shirts, which are well-received when presented). There is an excellent lunch followed by more conversation, hanging out, sharing the *Times*, etc. In mid-afternoon, we set off for Belfast Airport and say our goodbyes. No sooner than I get situated in the airport than there's an announcement that the plane will be delayed 45 minutes. A lot of time is spent rummaging at the newsstand thereafter, including finding a local real estate advertiser which I pick up to check out later. Finally I do get flown back to London and take the train to Victoria. I call Rob and Avedon for advice as to how to get as close as possible to their place on the Underground lines that are running, then get right on the Underground. This takes me to within two miles of their place so I hail a cab – one of those black old London cabs – and a cabby who calls me "Guv" takes me the rest of the way.

April 6 My last full day in the U.K. Take a combination of the Underground and British Rail to Welling, a southeast suburb of London, to visit Vince Clarke, who has the largest library of fanzines in the U.K. and who strongly encouraged me to come see it before leaving. (It turns out to be less than half the size of Terry's, but still impressive and well-organized.) He meets me at the station and we catch a bus to his place, a semi-detached house in an elderly subdivision of more of the same. Spend the afternoon there visiting with him, his collection, and Nigel Rowe, who comes around to use his duplicating equipment. I do my first slipsheeting since 1964. Later Vince serves us up a dinner and we all head off on the train to go to the Wellington. This is an enormous pub across from

Waterloo Station in London where the London area fans meet the evening of the first Thursday every month. We enter. There are well over 100 people there and the ones I know are like a reprise of the previous three weeks as far as Londoners are concerned. No full report now, but I have a great time. After closing, we filter across the street to Waterloo Station where we separate gradually as people head off to their train and Underground platforms. Finally only I and Jack Heneghan, who's staying out at East Ham, head down to the District Line Eastbound platform (leaving Joseph Nicholas, who has to go westbound) and home. Once there I spend a great deal of time reorganizing my luggage so everything will fit. It's a tight squeeze.

April 7 Nigel Rowe – a New Zealand fan who's been living and working in London the past two years and is going to go back to New Zealand in May, via the U.S. and including Northern California – came by to help me get my now stretched to the limit luggage via Underground to Heathrow. It's sunny and the temperature is about 52. Rob called from work to say goodbye. I say my goodbyes and thank yous to Avedon. Finally Nigel and I left and made smooth connections on the 1½ hour trip from East Ham to Heathrow. He helps me check in and then, it getting close to departure time, we say our see-you-in-May's to one another. Two minutes after I'm the other side of the barrier, the PA announces a 40-minute flight delay. I spend time browsing around the duty-free shops and other stores and finally the flight is called. This time the airplane is only about half full. I have a window seat on the "good" side of the aircraft and the aisle seat is taken by a very distinguished looking elderly lady who strikes up a conversation. She is a U.S. foreign service widow living in Lausanne, Switzerland, on her way to visit her daughter in Redwood City, California. We have a pleasant ongoing conversation throughout the flight, though I make it clear in a gentle way early on that this is my first time flying this particular flight and I will probably look out the window a lot. The way back is a spectacular journey over Iceland, Greenland, the northern portions of Canada (Baffin and Hudson Bays) and finally over Washington and Oregon, where spectacular views of the higher mountains are to be had. (Considering the Pacific Northwest's usual weather, this is highly unusual.) Once over California, there's a good view of Mt. Shasta's eastern slopes and then Mt. Lassen is almost directly below us. As we descend while nearing the Bay Area, we go over Napa Valley. Sonoma Valley and beyond is in shadow. As we land, it's announced that the temperature in San Francisco is 92!!! I breeze through Customs and arrange for my transportation through the broiling heat back to Oakland,

where my car is waiting at Carol's house. As my ride pulls out into U.S. 101 northbound to San Francisco, I strip off first my Levi jacket and then my flannel shirt, and pull my teeshirt out from inside my jeans. No more London weather!

To follow up on some stuff mentioned above: Charlie Brown ran the "fanzines by the pound" advertisement in the March and April issues of *Locus* and Andy Porter ran it in the April *SFC*. I received orders for twice as many fanzines as I actually had and returned quite a lot of money to those whose (mostly larger) orders I couldn't fill. The orders just started coming in when I left for my trip and when I returned there was a huge stack of them mixed into the mail. I took care of the smallest orders first so as to cover the most people. In writing to Charlie and Andy to ask them to stop running the advertisement, I put out an appeal (which I also sent to Mike Glyer) for fanzine editors to send spares of their zines to me and for anyone receiving and not keeping fanzines to send these along, even stating I'd come pick up by pre-arrangement if not too far away. I'd like to keep "fanzines by the pound" going for a while as a means of possibly recruiting new fanzine fans from the large readership of *Locus* and *SFC*.

Report in Progress, 1990

1991: Pam Wells

Pam Wells attended Chicon V in Chicago, Illinois, the 1991 Worldcon. The rival candidates were Abigail Frost and Bruno Ogorolec.

Platform

If you've heard of Pam Wells you're probably thinking of *Nutz*, possibly *Strumpet*, or maybe even *Six Shooter* or *Shallow End*. You might be thinking of her work on convention committees or pop quizzes, or even her participation in various British APAs. If you know her well, you might be thinking more about her friendliness and sense of humour, or perhaps her passion for shoes and chocolate. But if you were Pam Wells, you'd be thinking how crazy it is to promote yourself in a hundred words, when all you really want to say is: "Take me, America, I'm yours."

Nominators: Harry Bond, Jeanne Gomoll, Chuch Harris, Lucy Huntzinger and Martin Tudor.

Introductory: Depression Tango

Pam Wells

Back home from TAFF on a roll, only to find that rolling off is the easiest thing in the world. I can feel depression creeping, calling my name from over its shoulder, and I'm scared it will catch me again: scared that I'll be held in its spell for another winter, until I win another fan fund or some other significant achievement speaks to my self-worth synapses and hauls me out of the abyss. I'm not depressed yet, but I'm definitely teetering. And what better vantage point to write about it from: to be in sight of depression but not yet engulfed; to know that surely, inexorably, it will catch me again, but to pull as hard as I can away from its clutches. I feel like the drowning man on the shore, moving away from the waves more slowly than the tide comes in. One day he will go under, but not today.

In America I was happy. I was a welcomed guest, I was cosseted and cared for, I had a job to do and it was the easiest job in the world: be nice to people who are being nice to you. But more than that, the pervasive American culture caught up with me from the word go. The only acceptable attitude over there is Positive. Geri Sullivan, my first host, is a fine exemplar of this style. I caught it from her and used it to get me through the rest of the trip. It worked well, faltering only at the worldcon when negative reinforcement had a chance to show. I hate big crowds of people I don't know (dealing with crowds of friends is hard enough!), I hate poor organization when there's no need for it, I hate – well, Worldcons, I guess. I can't imagine anything persuading me to attend another one (although anyone who wishes to take this as a challenge is perfectly welcome to try). In fact Worldcon was the closest I got to viewing depression-think during my whole trip. And that wasn't very close at all, I can now say, from my new vantage point at the edge of the abyss.

I play music to keep it at bay, but only when I feel at peace enough to do so. Most times I am not at peace. I feel hounded by my neighbours, polluted by their noises seeping up through my floorboards. Music, television, voices, thumping noises more likely to be footfalls than violence, echoing pings and clunks, resounding thuds of bass on tracks I never want to hear again in my life. Chris Tarrant's voice whining more loudly downstairs than on my own clock radio in the morning. I hate them

for their intrusions, and I feel feeble for showing so little ability to rise above it all. My peace is sacrosanct; perhaps just half an hour when I return from work will be enough, but when that is stolen the fabric holding the inside of me together frays. Since I've been back in Britain the material has held for just two weeks. Don't let the bastards grind you down? Hah, that's just what they were designed to do! I am nothing if not obedient. Might hypnotism do the trick? (You are getting sleepy – even though there is mayhem all around you – you will rise above it and kip kip kip even while the floor is shaking all around you). San Francisco seems so far away from me now.

The stereo is playing the B52s: relentless cheer in the face of oncoming depression, and it's working. I'm getting mental throwbacks to my great train journey: 22 hours on Amtrak with virtually no sleep from Seattle to San Francisco, not one of my better ideas. All the best scenery – the mountains of northern California – happened after dark. It wasn't all bad, though: we passed some great coastal areas to the south of Tacoma, and it was wonderful to be staring out of a train window without having to be bright and bubbly for a change.

The first seven hours of the trip were fine, but after that, as the train filled up and I got less and less comfortable, I wanted to be doing something else. Anything else. Anyway, the track playing now on the B52s album sounds similar to a track I was listening to on my Walkman on the train, from a tape compiled for me by Lesley Ward, or perhaps it was Christina Lake. I must check the track titles and see if they are in any way related.

Some time later, I have ascertained that the B52s track is entitled "53 miles west of Venus", and the Amtrak track is called "White Eagle" by Tangerine Dream, from a tape compiled for me a few years ago by Christina Lake. So much for completeness in my reportage: if only my trip report could be this accurate. But it won't. I took a pocket cassette recorder with me but failed to use it during the entire four weeks – except to tape a bunch of Madison fans singing "Salsa y Ketchup" in the corridor outside the Wiscon room party at Worldcon. The recording makes it sound like a supremely tuneless Andy Hooper and his backing singers, many of whom forgot at least some of the words, and not nearly as hilarious as I remember it being at the time. Guess some things don't translate too well after the event. "You had to be there", right. So my trip report will have to be culled from the notes I made each night in my pocket notebook, and my memories.

Ah, memories! These are fond and loud now, but will fade and distort

as time passes, as fresh depression takes over my elated state. It's imperative that I get some of it down on paper now, before it all fades away into a vague pink blob of sunshine floating above the regular cesspit which is Life. So for now I chart the progress of my mental state and try to remember to copy and save any chunks of my letters that mention America, until I feel ready to transcribe the notebook and begin filling in the wealth of detail that has to be provided. Which will arrive first: full-blown depression or the trip report? My money's on the former: I know how to do that already, and it looms larger. The trip merely fades away inside my head. I wish it wouldn't.

Saliromania #6, October 1991

Chapter 1: All Gone to Look for America

Pam Wells

America is such a big place – how does anyone ever decide which bits of it to visit in any one trip? I've just been planning my first visit to America since my TAFF tour in 1991, and finding it every bit as hard as it was then to settle on where I want to go. There's so much to choose from, and so many willing hosts to meet. Unlike five years ago, I now know how much there is to look forward to over there. I want to see it *all*, and I want to see it *now*.

Before I ran for TAFF, I'd never particularly wanted to visit the States. Iceland, yes – I'd been there on holiday a few years back, and I was totally impressed by the place. But nowhere else in the world has held such magic for me, in my mind. America was a good place to visit because that was where so many of my friends lived, and TAFF could get me there.

Choosing which places to see isn't the easiest of tasks. I mean, America is *huge*. I had a short-list of places I really wanted to visit, and knew I'd only be able to get to about a quarter of them. So I concentrated on the absolute essentials. The West Coast. San Francisco, because Lucy Huntzinger used to live there and told me such wonderful things about the place. Seattle, because Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake rated it as the best place on their TAFF trip. Chicago, because that was where the Worldcon was, and Madison and Minneapolis, because they were both active fan cities near enough to Chicago. I had a Plan, which was to meet as many local people as possible beforehand, so that I'd be likely to know some other fans when I got to the con. All through my preparations I knew that the Worldcon was the bit of the trip that I'd have the most trouble with. I dislike large conventions, and this would be the biggest one I'd ever attended, and certainly somewhere between five and ten times larger than the average British Eastercon. Having some familiar faces in the crowd would make me feel somewhat less daunted by the whole prospect.

It was a little bit odd to construct a trip with no East Coast fan centres on it, perhaps, but I figured that those places would be more affordable to me if I ever went back, and I'd let TAFF pay for the farther flung destinations! (Pragmatic, and true.)

The trouble with America, when you look at it as a lump like this, is that there's always more. The trip I'm planning this year is built around going to Corflu. I've wanted to go to a Corflu ever since they started back in the 1980s, but I could never afford the trip – and as soon as it looked like I might be able to, I fell into a long patch of work problems. In 1993, I thought I might be at Corflu 10 in Madison (which would have been a wonderful revisit to an old fannish haunt from my TAFF trip) but redundancy intervened. Then I hoped to go to Corflu 12 in Las Vegas a couple of years later, but I'd just started a new job after a total of four redundancies in the previous five years, and I couldn't spare the money or risk asking for the time off. This year I'm still in that same job, and feeling secure enough to take a long holiday and spend all the credit I can get my hands on for one trip. So Corflu Nashville, here I come!

Organizing this holiday is in some ways just like planning my TAFF trip. Having a set window – the three weeks between Corflu and Eastercon – gives me a clear block of time to fill. My approach to the holiday is that if I'm going all the way to America, I might as well get to three or four different destinations while I'm there rather than fly straight in and out again. I mean, you'll get the jet-lag anyway, right, so why not make it *worth* it?

The process of narrowing down the destinations was even harder this time, because I wanted to go back to all the places from my TAFF trip, and I wanted to visit all the places I wasn't able to get to on my TAFF trip. I couldn't do either, of course. But I did make my task easier by refusing to let myself revisit anywhere I'd already been. This narrowed down the entire subcontinent of North America to North-America-except-for-five-cities – not much of a limitation, but helpful enough to construct an interesting trip without too many frustrations.

I really wanted to get to places like Texas and Canada, Boston and New Orleans, but had to leave them out. I tried to narrow down the field of potential destinations to places where I knew plenty of people, because those aspects – the hanging out, the parties, the late night conversations in people's living rooms – were what I most enjoyed from my TAFF trip. So first on the list had to be Las Vegas, home of a whole new fan group that had sprung up since my TAFF trip. I'm intrigued about how such a huge group of people manage to co-edit a fanzine (from where I sit, it's hard enough with just three editors!) and how they've coalesced from bugger all into a Huge Fannish Presence in less than five years. And then there was the East Coast, which I neglected entirely last time. New York and Washington DC seemed like the obvious choices here – partly as cultural

centres, and partly because I know (and know of) so many people in and around those areas.

US fandom seems so spread out sometimes. I guess this is hardly surprising, given the size of North America compared with tiny little Britain. But, just like UK fandom, it seems to be largely centred around major towns and cities – London, Leeds, Cambridge, Croydon, Glasgow, Sheffield, Bristol and Birmingham could substitute for New York, Minneapolis, Madison, Seattle, Toronto, Chicago, San Francisco and, er, Birmingham. But the amount of time it takes to visit fans in and around the different cities is a whole order of magnitude larger in the States than over here. For example, I invited Geri Sullivan to come along to the party that Moshe Feder has rashly agreed to throw for me in New York. She thanked me, but pointed out that I shouldn't count on seeing her there because it's a 1200 mile round trip from Minneapolis. Over here, I think nothing of going to Birmingham or Sheffield or Bristol or Cambridge for a party. And Jackie McRobert's ex-boyfriend seems to spend more of his local fanac time in Leeds than in Glasgow these days.

Flying in America may be much cheaper, distance for distance, than in Europe, but there's still all that time to think of. And whatever we might think of British Rail, it's a whole order of magnitude better than Amtrak. You can get from most cities to most other cities by train here, still. And although comparatively few fans tend to drive, we can travel faster on British motorways than in the US, even though the distances we cover are far shorter. American TAFF winners coming to Britain must think it's a piece of piss.

There are also similarities between UK and US fandoms. New York fandom isn't, in exactly the same way that London fandom isn't. Both areas have lots of fans, but there isn't a cohesive "fandom" in either metropolis. And, despite the obvious differences of style and outlook, I think that Minneapolis fandom is very similar to Leeds fandom: both have a gestalt; a very strong shared mood. But there's a huge difference when it comes to Worldcons: over here it seems to take the whole of UK fandom (plus hangers on) to run one, whereas there it seems to take the whole of a major city (plus hangers on), leaving the rest of the country free to get on with whatever other fanac they choose.

One of my favourite things in fandom is putting faces to names. I'm hoping to put a lot of faces to a lot of names this trip, just like I did on my TAFF tour. It's a lot easier to do this in a different country – these days, at British conventions, it's possible for me to spend my entire time hanging out with people I already know. I try to avoid falling into this trap, though,

and usually only think of it as a successful convention if I've met at least one interesting new person. But in America that achievement is practically guaranteed. I have mental pictures of some of the people I trade fanzines or e-mail with, and I'm eager to see how different my mind-images will be from their bodies in the flesh.

At this point, I'm wondering what the differences between this trip and my TAFF trip will be. Will the experience of interaction with American fandom be different when I pay my own dime than when I was an Honoured Representative? Greg Pickersgill assures me that I won't notice a scrap of difference, but I'd like to hope that I will. This time I won't have that same apprehension, or that same sense of wonder, as when I was first driven along wide American avenues, on the wrong side of the road, looking in awe at all those detached wooden houses with all that space between them. It looked to me like something out of *Anne Of Green Gables*, though I know that wasn't set in Minneapolis...

This time I'm being met by my good friend Lucy Huntzinger from her local airport, and going to Corflu, the convention she's organizing, the next day. Back then I was met by a whole bunch of Minneapolis fans who I mostly didn't know; I was delighted to walk through the airport arrivals area to find a group of people waving a bunch of flowers and a huge balloon with "TAFF" emblazoned on it. The exhaustion of a transatlantic flight, including a long run through Chicago O'Hare airport (with a bad back and all my luggage) to make my connecting flight, was swept away by suddenly being the Star Arrival. I switched into performance mode, and thoroughly enjoyed the airport welcome party and the more traditional house party back at Geri Sullivan and Jeff Schalles' place – the famous Toad Hall. I was tired, but I stayed up and partied. It was My Job, and it was a job I was *delighted* to have. I knew a little of the joy of being a Star, and I *liked* it. And I want *more* of it, wherever I can find it!

A couple of days ago, Lucy Huntzinger e-mailed me and asked if I'd be the MC for the auction at Corflu. This is one of the very best things that could have been asked of me – it will give me the chance to be a little bit famous on this trip as well. Performing for My Public is something that I really enjoy. Is it just me, or am I really getting better at getting up on stage as the years go by? I certainly enjoy it all so much more now than in those shyer, nicer times of my early days in fandom. I only hope that my Britfan-centric patter goes over OK in front of an all-American audience, though....

I know that a Corflu will be a whole load different from a Worldcon. And I know there has been some talk about changing the destination of

TAFF trips to smaller conventions such as Corflu. I think this would be a big mistake. The Worldcon, with its sheer size and magnitude of dauntingness, and its opportunities to meet people whose paths you would never otherwise cross, is vital to the delegate's experience of TAFF.

The first thing that strikes you about America is that it is *huge*. Seeing it from the perspective of cosy fan gatherings, local house parties and small special-interest conventions would never convey the same image. "Huge" was a concept that gathered flesh throughout my TAFF trip. The Minnesota state fair in Minneapolis. Vast heaps of food at a Fish Fry in Madison. The Chicago Worldcon. The Olympic mountains to the west of Seattle. The amazing redwood trees in Northern California. The impressive amount of lingerie I could buy in my size. It all sort of fitted together. I wonder if on a second visit the hugeness of everything will hit me in quite the same way. Or has my mind expanded to accept it all as simply another sort of Normal now?

On that first trip, I was seeing America as a macrocosm, and trying to break it down into smaller, easier-to-handle chunks. This time, I'm seeing the microcosm straight off. I'm happier with Small Pictures; ones that will fit in my hand or my brain or my field of vision. This time I'm linking a series of episodes together into a trip; back then I was trying to break down a trip into a series of episodes. (Does that make any sense to anyone else except me?)

I'm hoping to use this holiday as a springboard from which to write up that TAFF trip, seeing America as I saw it then through these eyes now. I'm not sure it can be done, but it's the best plan I've got from this distance. I'm quite sure that the best time to write up a TAFF trip is within a year of returning from it, but I didn't – and now those days, and that immediacy, are gone. I'm proud of the administration of TAFF I undertook, but I'll always be niggled by guilt if my trip report doesn't get written. Let this, then, be my first chapter.

Attitude #7, February 1996

Chapter 2: Minneapolis Memories

Pam Wells

My TAFF trip did not have an auspicious start. A few days before I was due to leave, I tore a ligament in my back. I'd spent the last three days before my journey off work lying down on the floor, packing my suitcases very gingerly in between times. My doctor had prescribed me a large supply of heavy duty painkillers, which he insisted I took morning and night, whether I felt like I needed them or not. I wasn't supposed to carry anything heavy for the next few days, so my parents came to the airport with me to deal with my luggage.

The American Airlines flight arrived in plenty of time, and we all dutifully trooped on – with one exception. One of the passengers who'd checked in never boarded the plane, and so we had to wait while their luggage was removed from the hold. Then the baggage doors wouldn't close automatically, so the ground crew had to be called back to shut them from outside. And then we had to wait for another place in the queue with Air Traffic Control before we could depart. By the time we took off we were over an hour and a half late; I was worried about my back, since I was being squeezed into an airline seat for even longer, and I was also concerned that I might miss my connecting flight.

We arrived in Chicago O'Hare almost two hours late. My flight to Minneapolis was due to leave in less than an hour, and I was really starting to panic now. It hadn't occurred to me that it might be possible to get a later flight; I thought I'd be stranded in Chicago if I didn't get through in time. We had to go through customs and passport control with all our luggage, and there wasn't time for me to re-check my cases for the Minneapolis flight. I ran the entire length of O'Hare airport, making it to my connection with scant minutes to spare. The flight attendants on the Minneapolis-bound plane looked at my anxious, sweaty face in mild bemusement, but dealt with my copious luggage and showed me to my seat. For the first time since I boarded the plane at Heathrow, I could relax. Despite all the hassle and pressure, my luggage and I had got to where we were supposed to be. Geri Sullivan would be meeting me at the airport. I had a sackful of painkillers if I needed them. There was no need to worry

now.

Touchdown in Minneapolis, and I'd been awake for more than 18 hours. My body clock told me it was bedtime, and I was looking forward to a good, long sleep. My luggage and I wandered towards the arrivals area. And I was stunned by the sight that greeted me.

Geri Sullivan was there, all right, but so were Simba Blood, Jennifer and Karen Cooper, Ken Fletcher, Jeff Schalles and Jim Young. They were holding balloons, flowers, and streamers, and placards that said "TAFF" and "WELCOME PAM" on them in large, friendly letters. I was gobsmacked; I hadn't expected quite that much of a welcome. Immediately my tiredness faded and my pleasure at being amongst new friends rose. This was one of the most intense examples of getting my "second wind" that I've ever experienced.

Bemused and slightly shell-shocked, I followed Simba to her car, and we drove out to Geri and Jeff's place: the infamous and very beautiful Toad Hall. They were having a party for me, and many other local area fans showed up to say hi to the strange visiting English woman, including Don Bailey, Kay Drache, Dean Gahlon, Fred and Susan Levy Haskell, Jeanne Mealy and John Stanley, and Dave Romm.

I have a photo of the centrepiece of the party: an edible aquarium. Geri had made this culinary masterpiece with greenish-blue jello and assorted gummi-fish, with the fish suspended in the jello as if swimming through water, in a large candy jar. It was truly strange, and I loved it to pieces. In fairness, I have to say it was better to look at than to taste; those pesky fishes were not so much chewy as downright sticky. After you'd eaten one, your teeth felt like they were wearing sweaters. Musta been a chemical reaction with the jello, or something. Hell, I'm no scientist....

Speaking of sweaters, that was the party where I found out that the American term for what we call a "jumper" is a "sweater". In fact, "sweater" is a generic term which encompasses pullovers, jumpers and cardigans. As far as I could tell, the term "jumper" in American means what us Brits would call a "pinafore dress". But I am by no means certain that this is a universal usage there. Another word difference I discovered at that party was that, in the US, a "shag" is a type of haircut. Two countries separated by a common language, indeed....

My first impressions of America were that it was familiar but different. The detached wooden houses reminded me strongly of *Anne of Green Gables*, though I know that's Canadian. I was charmed by the loud noise of the cicadas, audible constantly after dark in Minneapolis; that was definitely alien, yet somehow quite comforting. I was struck by the

different electrical plugs and switches, most notably the way you turn light-switches up for on and down for off, the other way around from what I'm used to. I'd expected the traffic to move on the opposite side of the road, but I never got used to getting in the passenger seat on the right hand side of the car. (On my second trip to the States, I had no problem with that, but I didn't manage it once, unaided, during the whole of my TAFF trip.)

I took to my bed before midnight, while the party was still in full swing, which is unusual for me, but I could at least legitimately blame the jet-lag. I laid my head down in the first of many very comfortable guest rooms that I would encounter on my trip.

My body-clock, still on British time, woke me at around 6 a.m. local time, and as I looked around the room, I felt the awe of being halfway around the world all over again. I got up, threw a jacket on over my nightie, and stood out on the porch, just looking around and surveying the landscape at the back of Toad Hall. There was a faint rumble of traffic, but no sound of cicadas. I saw a squirrel climb the roof of a house opposite. The houses were not in straight rows like in Britain, but they were vaguely dotted about – obviously all in a line, but not as regimented as over here. The air was good, fresh, clean, morning air. I felt so happy to be here, and spent a few moments drinking in the atmosphere around me. Then I went back to bed and resumed my sleep until a more decent hour.

I awoke again at around noonish to the aroma of Jeff Schalles' blueberry pancakes, which made a wonderful breakfast. Then Geri and I went out for a drive; we went shopping in St Paul, and then to look at the Minnehaha Falls – which were lovely, although they weren't a patch on the impressively dramatic waterfalls I'd seen in Iceland a few years earlier. While we were walking around, a complete stranger said "Hi" to us for no apparent reason. I was startled; people just don't do that sort of thing in London.

That evening, we went with some local fans to the Sculpture Garden, which I was very taken with. I took a few photos, but it was dusk while we were there and so they didn't come out very clearly. My favourite sculpture was of a large red cherry on a long metal spoon. From there, we went on for ice creams at Sebastian Joe's, which the local fans were inordinately proud of, but which I thought were nice, but nothing special. (Mental note: must take as many Minneapolis fans as possible to Marine Ices in Camden Town.) Then, back at Toad Hall, Geri and I sat up talking until way past midnight, about personal stuff, suicide, relationships, compulsiveness, etc. We discovered that we were both compulsive

perfectionists, and bonded accordingly.

The next day, on a beautifully sunny, scorchingly hot afternoon, we drove in Jeff's Chevy to some original prairie land near their house, where we went for a walk. It was a glorious sight; unspoiled landscape, and beautiful views over a lake (which apparently had a beach for nude sunbathing, though I don't remember seeing any examples). You could almost believe you were in the middle of nowhere, but for the faint skyscrapers of downtown Minneapolis in the distance.

That evening, we had a women's night out at a local Chinese restaurant; "we" being Terry Garey, Karen Johnson, Karen Schaffer, Geri and me. The food and the conversation were truly excellent. I really enjoy small dinner parties with convivial company; it's much easier to get to know people in a group where there's only one conversation happening at a time, and everyone gets to participate.

After we left the restaurant, Geri suggested that we went shopping. I thought she was joking; it was 10:30 at night! But we spent a delightful hour or so at Byerley's grocery store, where I bought Oreo cookies and other strange American food delights. It was fun going up and down the vegetable aisle, pointing at things and saying what they were called. Geri said "eggplant", which I countered with "aubergine"; she said "zucchini" and I replied "courgette"; but when I responded with "swede" to her "rutabaga", she looked at me in horror. "You can't be serious; that's just so *rude*," she told me. The service in Byerley's was impeccable; a gorgeous male assistant carried our purchases out to the car and loaded them into the boot – er, trunk – for us.

I spent much of the next day in the company of Joyce Scrivner. We had lunch together and then drove around Minneapolis and St Paul, where I bought some wonderful earrings which are nuns (I kid you not). I paddled in the Mississippi – or, rather, I dipped a toe in the water. Then we went back to Joyce's condo, where we fanned our ac by stuffing some envelopes for Chicon.

That evening, Simba Blood came to collect me; I would be spending the second part of my Minneapolis stay with her and Mark Sperhauk. We met up with Ericka Johnson and went shopping in a local shopping mall, where I discovered the delights of American lingerie in large sizes, and wished it could be this way at home too. Then we went on to a local bar and drank what Simba called "hard cider" (which was actually draft Woodpecker). An Irish band was playing bad Irish music, and I thought "I came all the way over from England, for *this*?"

The next morning, Mark, Ericka and I had breakfast at the Seward

café, an alternative-style hippy-commune-type place, which sold good, wholesome whole food. I really liked the atmosphere there. Then Ericka and I went shopping, and I discovered the Lane Bryant chain of stores. This is the US equivalent of Evans, but with cheaper and better quality clothing, and more choice. America was turning out to be a shopping mecca for this larger-than-average-sized British woman.

That afternoon, Simba and Mark took me to the Minnesota State Fair, where we met up with their friends Amy and Brian. That was a truly awesome experience. First of all, the fairground site was enormous, far larger than anything I've ever seen over here. There was a vast section of huge farm machinery; I took a snapshot of Amy sitting in one of the wheels of a particularly large tractor, just to remind myself of the sheer scale of that stuff. It made me feel completely overawed. Then there were all the different state competitions, from best jam to best home-grown vegetables to best dressmaking to best artwork, just like a church fête might have over here, but on a far larger scale. I liked the homeliness of this part of the fair, compared with the professionalism of the farm machinery side of things.

Then there was what Simba and the others kept referring to as the "Midway", which is, I gather, the equivalent of what we'd call a fairground in the UK. Yes, there was an entire fairground in the middle of the Minnesota State Fair, and I enjoyed it to pieces. Especially the bumper boats, which I rode on and got myself soaked through. I hadn't seen bumper boats before, and I was totally enchanted by the concept. Dodgems on water: that's cool by me.

And everywhere you went throughout the fair, people were selling food. Not just food, but food on sticks. It was a sort of joke, that whatever you ate would come on a stick. And every year, apparently, there's something new on a stick. This year it was walleye on a stick. I had no idea what a walleye was; I was enormously relieved to discover that it was a type of fish. I didn't try it, but I did eat many other stick-bound comestibles, most of which were corn dogs, for which I developed a great fondness. (A corn dog is like a hot dog, but covered in corn batter. Yum!) I remember noticing that the food was all much less greasy than you'd get at a fairground in Britain.

We spent many hours at the Minnesota State Fair. We walked vast distances. We ate masses of junk food. And we still didn't see it all. I'd really love to go back again, one day.

And then, all too soon, it was Friday 23rd August 1991, my last day in Minneapolis. I got up at 7:30 so that we could make an early start.

Simba, Peter Larsen and I drove the 200-odd miles to Madison, which would be my next port of call. The road trip was a much more interesting way of getting there than an internal flight would have been; even travelling on Interstate roads, you get more of a feel of the country you're passing through. I spent some time talking about piercings and body modifications with Peter. We stopped *en route* at a café called the Norske Nook for lunch. The place is famous for what Simba called "tall pies"; when I spotted the selection in their display cabinet, I could only concur with her description. But after a very stodgy main course of slices of beef in gravy on white bread (traditional bland American food), I couldn't face a tall pie of any description. To this day, I wonder what the delicious-looking lemon meringue pie would have tasted like.

The journey ended at about 4 p.m.

Attitude #12, November 1997

1992: Jeanne Bowman

Jeanne Bowman attended Illumination in Blackpool, Lancashire, the 1992 UK Eastercon. The rival candidate was Richard Brandt.

Platform

Big. Blonde. Boisterous. Brassy. Bright. An asset at every convention. A decade in Bay Area fandom. Corflu. Ditto. Member Glen Ellen Mafia. Columnist for new improved Outworlds. Trip report: great column fodder. Fan writings in Trap Door, Whistlestar, Majoon and other internationally acclaimed journals. Bad jokes in Maledicta. Jackie Chan Fan. Owner, largest collection of Doggie Diner heads on earth, and they are the largest dog heads on earth. Hot dog party girl, will travel. Get me out of the house! In conclusion, my good friend Charles Willeford once offered to hire me to go to all his lectures and laugh. Real loud.

Jeanne Bowman's nominators are: Richard Brandt, Jerry Kaufman, Dave Langford, Spike Parsons, Paul Skelton.

The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 1

Jeanne Bowman

Wednesday. Heathrow. Judith Hanna greets at tube – move into Frinton Road – Joseph Nicholas is Attila the Tidy. Dinner: **ABIGAIL FROST**, Woman of Presence. Labour victory certain. Linda Krawecke's gumbo: yum. *Thursday.* Walked. Trafalgar Square, Kew Gardens, rhododendrons not as good as home. Judith's home-cooked feast, then election. Fuck the Tories. *Friday.* Slept in. British Natural History Museum. Dinner: Anne Hamill, Jimmy Robertson. Jimmy at 9:20: "That's a bomb." (It was.) Ethnic food intro: Irn Bru. *Saturday.* Shopping with Pam Wells. Wore shoes. *Sunday.* Judith escorts to Reading. Martin Hoare's Birthday Party. He is late for it (pub). Ethnic drinking. *Monday.* Hazel Langford lured into our *[i.e. Jeanne's and Don Herron's]* first literary pilgrimage and hometown tour: Amersham & Arthur Machen. Lunch in AM's local, The King's Arms. Describe Dave L. as exotic. Walk Oxford. Learn of Dave "PV=nRT" Langford's explosive student days. Ethnic Turkish food. *Tuesday.* On to investigate henges, "Hills of Dreams" and Welsh slag heaps.... [14 Apr, 11:15-11:30 a.m.]

Ansible #57½, Easter 1992

The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 2

Jeanne Bowman

We must down to the sea – hustle to Illumination in time to be identified from the opening audience. “Hello Jeanne.” “Hello Pam.” TAFF snapshots panel. 7 people attend, inc. ops personnel. Hotel room has a gorgeous Irish Sea view, and a peculiar plaintive wailing with the ocean breezes. *Saturday*. Illumination. Joseph Nicholas, Green, astonished, watches Greys hoist selves on own petards in panel debate. Ian Watson draws big crowd for “51st State” discussion. I assert Puerto Rico first in line for the honour. Brief pang of homesickness – where are the dozens of hard boiled eggs to colour? Haunting Ramsey Campbell reading. Disco sucks. *Sunday*. Illumination. Pam Wells reveals interest in filking. “Ghosts of Honour” panel – Don Herron flawless laconic Willeford, Ian Watson transcendent as Olaf Stapledon, sly double headed Wm. Burroughs characters and Bob Shaw. Howling success. Colour Coordinated TAFF Auction. *Monday*. Indian lunch with the Ramsey Campbells. Peter Atkins and Paul McAuley lasted till they threw us out at 4 p.m. Continued illumination with D. West in Keighley. *Tuesday*. Drag D. to Haworth (he offers to show street corner where Brontë boy bought dope) and we wuther in the heights....

Ansible #97½, August 1995

1993: Abigail Frost

Abigail Frost attended ConFrancisco in San Francisco, California, the 1993 Worldcon; also ReinCONation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The rival candidates were Michael Ashley, Tony Berry and Ashley Watkins. Abigail Frost died in 2009.

Platform

YOU SHOULD VOTE FOR ABIGAIL BECAUSE:

Anything she could say about Tony Berry would only make him sound more interesting *** Ashley Watkins just hasn't been the same since he gave up transvestism *** Michael Ashley will not, as promised, spend all the money on drink, but will keep TAFF in apple-pie order, thereby depriving us all of honest mirth, which we badly need in these hard times *** All the other rumoured candidates were only trying to stop each other *** It will get right up Avedon Carol's nose.

Vote for the woman of your choice!

Nominators: Lilian Edwards, Jeanne Gomoll, Dave Langford, Joseph Nicholas and Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden

In Progress

Abigail Frost

Hello, Langford. This is a fanzine; what you are supposed to do is print a suitable number of copies with *Ansible* and hand them out at the Tun. You should see this first as a fax; you have my permission (indeed orders) to use the fax as a master if the airmail version fails to reach you in time. I'm putting this bit in here so that people will realize it's not your fault if the thing is less than beautiful in appearance. I'll give you the money when I see you. Now stop dithering and get on with it please. Thanks to Andy Hooper for loan of computer, and to Arnie Katz for colonial duplication. Art by Bill Rotsler (pgs. 1, 2, 3) & Bill Kunkel (page 4). Copies may be available from Abigail Frost, 95 Wilmot St. London E2 OBP.

I need to *know* they're there to be able to work....

IF IT'S SEATTLE THIS MUST BE WEDNESDAY

Arrived at JFK Wednesday evening; G Farber waiting and even recognisable at the gate. Despite all my elaborate precautions against being taken for a wetback (most of my Abbey National account converted to traveller's cheques, addresses of practically everyone I know in the States, Official Looking Letters from ReinCONation and from J Bowman masquerading as WSFS Inc, lunch invitation from Famous New York Publishers etc) they just waved me through Immigration and I was mildly disappointed. Renewed acquaintance with subway and crashed out in the famously grungy Lower East Side.

Next day, lunch with Patrick and Teresa (and, as it turned out, Tom Webber). "Listen, Gary," I'd said, "I'm here to spread peace love cosmic harmony and mutual understanding between North American and European fandom. New York City can sort out its own shit." Tor Books was oddly homelike; reception littered with stuff being sorted out and people eating pizza at desks. David Hartwell passed by waving a fax from Golly's. (I come all this way to see people who are having lunch with

Richard Evans?) Froze to death at lunch (airconditioning! An invention of the devil! And there will be more of it!); grilled by P&T about Joy Hibbert (why, I still can't work out).

Met Gary at the Tor lobby to walk about in search of a bar which, he said, sold *good* American beer; then decided we hadn't enough time so started walking in the other direction to meet le tout New York for dinner. I'd forgotten that aspect. Le tout New York was fine, and talked all the time. Back to Clinton Street for party. Crazed and increasingly desperate search for paper cups along the way ("Couldn't you decant soft drinks into empty beer bottles?" I suggested, and got looked at like something out of Animal House. Paper cups! We must have paper cups!). Lise Eisenberg discovered plastic bottles of what, if it's reached California and I have anything to do with it, will be the next British fan cult:

Blue Stuff, aka Blue Raspberry Drink. 100% chemicals and very nice with gin. Ended up pouring half my gin into a soda bottle to take with me, and leaving half as a thank-you for the unrich Farber. Don't Americans drink gin?

It would seem not. In Minneapolis Geri Sullivan and Jeff Schalles pressed the best part of a bottle on me, bought for Chuck Harris was it last year and not finished indeed barely started by him. I did my best for the honour of Britain with it, especially once I'd discovered that consuite sour cut with club soda made a fairly reasonable mixer in the absence of tonic.

ReinCONation was – wonderful? weird? I am still weighing up its sheer *strangeness*. Everyone tells me it's the nearest thing to a British convention in the US; substitute consuite-life for bar-life and yes, I can see it. I failed to get to much of the programme (partly because, in the hotel that hosts vast Minicons, it was just so far away), but we have nothing like as much fan programming anywhere, even at Mexicon. But the fan panel I went to seemed just like home, except that all the panellists seemed much more articulate than any of our usual suspects. But... but... there was something I don't think I'll ever quite nail down that was that little bit alien.

I come from a fandom, indeed a national class culture, where the sign of total acceptance is that they start to ignore you; when they really love you they insult you. I suspect it has to do with the upperclass life in which everybody was at boarding school with everybody else and remembers them being sick at dancing class at the age of seven. I don't come from that segment of society, but it's sort of in the water and in any case if, like me, you get sent from a decent state school to Oxford you rapidly learn to sink or swim in it. Your typical Minneapolis fan has an almost

imperturbably sunny nature, an inalienable friendliness, which is not at all easy for your standard sharp and snarling London fan to deal with. If you encountered anything like this at home it would be phoney to the nth degree; here it isn't. Step back and try to imagine Michael Ashley here. It's painful. Try to imagine Chris Bell. It's hilarious. Try to imagine me, and I suppose it's just puzzling. [*The Plain People of Fandom:* You overestimate yourself, sunshine. It's obscene, that's what it is.]

Farber gave me a good tip before I left NYC: "If there's anything to do with music going on, go; it's not bloody filk." Dead right there, mate. Are you listening, Glasgow? Give these people a slot and a decent sized room with a PA and tell them just to fill it for the evening. I was too tired to take in much of the Friday night concert but the Saturday jam sessions were a delight.

There was also a trip to the Renaissance Fair (more music, things [besides me] on sticks, thoroughly bizarre crafts, especially immensely complicated multicoloured dragon candles); lunch with Joyce Scrivner (I think the first American fan I got to know, back at Seacon 79) but for now, perhaps, that's enough Minneapolis.

IT'S WEDNESDAY, SO IT'S SEATTLE.

So far, not much to report. Langford and Wells get black marks for not describing Andy Hooper adequately; for future reference, the American equivalent of Mike Dickinson will do. (I forgot to say that ReinCONation boasted two Roy Kettle clones, one of whom knows Dermot Dobson. Loud Bangs across the sea.) Fortunately, it did not quite get to the point of Carrie Root going off in one direction to page me, and me going off in the other to page them, but it was a close-run thing. By the time one's adjusted to the fact that Seattle airport has its own internal subway all past instructions have dissolved in awe. Very good Malaysian meal with Andy and Carrie; successful hunt for British Sunday paper (five bucks! Ouch! On the other hand I bought one in Minneapolis too and it turned out to be LAST WEEK'S!); trip round a supermarket. I am thinking of organizing Supermarkets of the World package tours.

AIRHEADS UNITE

I hate, I hate, I absolutely hate long flights. Never again, I said, carefully ignoring the fact that I have to get back home somehow. Fortunately these

days they give you free drinks, and right back in the smoking section you get all the drunks and flying-fearers so it might as well be a convention. But, to my amazement, after four of them I realize I love internal flights. Dear little plane, upholstery a bit tatty, none of this pretence that we're all international jetsetters wanting to send faxes in mid-air. No bloody passport control; turn up and get on. And of course, by cricking one's neck a bit one can see vast tracts of Great American Landscape. Musing on the odd appearance of clouds from above ("why, that might almost be an Arctic coastline with icebergs") on the way to O'Hare I suddenly realized that it *was* a coastline, as a Great Lake just exactly like my school atlas loomed plain dark blue out of the scuzzy white.

The airports are nice, too, when your bags are checked in and you have just a few minutes to catch a ciggy in the carpark (O'Hare! World's greatest airport! Has a smoking section *right by the gate*!). Shall retain fond memories of Denver: 88 hot, dry degrees, clear sky, views of distant mountains. I mean New York's ok, you know, but it's not what you'd call foreign....

SO FAR, SO [*COUGH!*]

Have not yet been assaulted by rabid anti-smokers; in fact people seem apologetic about it. Having no great trouble really. In fact, all this bit is is a convenient spot to tell you about, oh, god, I can't remember the name of the place, but it's near Gary's housesit. Imagine Spaghetti Junction, the Blackwall Tunnel exit and Hyde Park Corner all rolled together. Lots of cars, coming from several different directions, and it's rush hour and they're all standing there packed together with the engines running. Above the whole unbeautiful mess is a billboard advertising cigarettes, with compulsory Surgeon-General's Warning, which the random factors have made: CIGARETTE SMOKE CONTAINS CARBON MONOXIDE. At this point, *Get a Life!* seems an appropriate response.

BLACK SPOT

If you don't know from personal experience what the Wrath of Frost can be like, ask Langford. Or if in the US, ask Seth Breidbart, who's seen it in action though not aimed at him. Put it this way: Joyce told me that there are a couple of US cons (or possibly other fan organizations, can't find me notes) which will give $500 each to the appropriate fan fund for each

complete trip report published. Now, what's Peter Roberts ever done to you that you shouldn't warn him? Or Kevin Smith? Do you really want to see Rob and Avedon permanently hospitalized? Greg's a fragile and sensitive soul, isn't he? Lilian and Christina – life would be a little greyer without them, wouldn't it? Pam Wells is having a hard enough time already, isn't she? So do your duty and get the buggers writing away before I come home, ok?

WILL SOMEBODY ELSE PLEASE DO THIS

In the nature of things, when staying two nights with G Farber you end up with a certain amount of what I am normally far too grand to call smoffing. Result of this one is suggestion of a new fan fund: exchange between anglophone and non-anglophone countries. This is plainly the next frontier for fan funds; question is, how to do it at all without things getting totally smeared all over the place, and how not to make it we-the-anglophones-spreading-the-true-gospel-to-the-underprivileged.

Think about it. Talk about it. Then execute it brilliantly without me or Gary having to do a hand's turn, please.

That's what I like – a man with a five-and-a-quarter-inch drive

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In Progress, September 1993

The Frost Report

Abigail Frost

[Continuing the brand-new TAFF tradition of instant Ansible *publication,* ***Abigail Frost*** *whizzes us bits of her US trip report even as it happens....]*

Jeanne Bowman requested silly things – "uniquely British, small, cheap, like silly condoms and beermats" – to auction at ConFrancisco. Gee thanks Jeanne, my last day wasn't supposed to be spent in pubs and chemists'. Trawl of Bethnal Green Road produced: 1 can Irn Bru; several packets funsized Mars bars etc; two vile "jewel lollies", blue raspberry sour flavour, made in Thailand for Irish company; latest issue *When Saturday Comes* (football semiprozine); 1 Dennis the Menace mug; 1 *Thunderbirds* ditto; 1 tin Brick Lane curry powder; 1 *Beezer Quarterly*; Fun Fun Fun filling out customs declaration....

New York. When I told Andy Hooper I was staying with Gary Farber he seemed surprised. "He hasn't the right to invite you... he sleeps on Moshe's sofa... he is in no position to be a host!" (GF is currently house-sitting for someone.) *Gary:* "Tell him I'm pushing a cart around the lower East Side and I put you in the cart and covered you with a garbage bag." So I did... shame I got the giggles halfway through.

Farber talks. I'd forgotten this. Lunch with Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden. They talk too. Help. Voice already on way out. Please fax new larynx c/o Geri Sullivan. [19 August]

Minneapolis. ReinCONation fun but weird. A world of seraphically happy people who sing and read poetry at each other. Alternated between thinking oneself in Paradise surrounded by guardian angels and feeling like an alien. Asked to contribute reading to an open mike thingy on Sat night; commandeered Nigel Rowe (formerly of our own parish) to help. People were taking the evening's beatnik theme very seriously (eg readings from *Howl*). Sudden inspiration: I had some beatnik experimental writing to hand, the phoney Camcon report in the Mexicon 2 fanzine. So handed Nigel a plastic tub which had contained pretzels till I brilliantly ate them all, told him to beat it at random while I read, and when called put on my shades and jumped on a chair and did all that stuff about cubes and Wittgenstein and Margaret Welbank in a rapid doomladen voice. Got the odd laugh.

ReinCONation news for *Ansible*: Twin Cities fan, poet, musician, storyteller and general Good Thing Elise Matthesen was having a birthday celebration with chums in hotel restaurant when the woman at the next table approached her – "You look so nice and so do all your friends, so who are you?" So Elise introduced herself and the con, so to speak. "I'm Maya Angelou," said the woman, and bought them some wine. "Gosh wow er um," said Elise....

So homesick I spent $5 on *Independent on Sunday*. "Not much seems to have changed at home... BLOODY HELL IT'S LAST WEEK'S ISSUE." Grr.

Why don't you fax me back, you bastard scum? [23 August]

Seattle. Read some article in some fanzine called *Mimosa* by some fellow who edited some con newsletter on some Channel Island or other. Doesn't it make you sick when people take all the credit for the Great British Con Newsletter without even mentioning *Cactus Times*? Went to zoo with Andy Hooper and took picture of racket-tailed drongo. Alas there was only one so can't say drongides.... Also got a photo of giant Washington slug at zoo (not encaged, just wandering over path). Marmots are ridiculous bloody animals. [26-27 August]

Ansible #74, September 1993

The Frost Report: Fragment

Abigail Frost

You left your heroine at Seattle Zoo, finding a bright orange slug with beautifully crisp dotted lines on its back (I bet they don't come out in the slide, though). Seattle turns out to be paradise on Earth. As an estuarine port with an aviation factory, it is of course the colonial equivalent of Bristol, but that doesn't quite cover it adequately. Mostly I lotos-ate (Lebanese meal with le tout Seattle, party at Vonda McIntyre's where I was billeted in her absence) and shopped (Pike Place Market, Left Bank Books and the unutterably wonderful Archie McPhee's), but had a healthy day walking in the foothills of Mt Rainier with Andy Hooper, Carrie Root and Bill "I tell you it's a gigantic mutant gerbil!" Bodden. Pine martens chased ground squirrels up trees, marmots (words cannot express how ridiculous they are, honest) bared their teeth at Andy as he declaimed fanzine articles to the echoing glade, glaciers crept inexorably downwards and a chipmunk climbed up my jumper.

Ansible #97½, August 1995

The Frost Report: ConFrancisco

Abigail Frost

"It was *boring*," said ever-ecstatic Abigail Frost of this year's Worldcon in San Francisco – "except you WON'T FUCKING BELIEVE who won Best Semiprozine!" [To general amazement Andy Porter's *Science Fiction Chronicle* had beaten Charles N. Brown's *Locus* by one vote, following recounts. More from Abigail:]

The con lacked centre, and the sort of spontaneous Great Moment we expect of big cons didn't really have a chance. No bloody bar in the Moscone Centre, for a start. (Not even a Harvey Milk Bar, ho ho.) 8,000 people there, yet one rarely saw more than 20 of them in the same place doing the same thing. Grew heartily sick of seeing friends going up the escalator as I was coming down. If only Banks had been there to climb the Parc 55 hotel. (But if he had, as a filthy pro he'd have climbed the ANA, which I only really penetrated for the Tor Books party.) *Ansible* helped, since one could always stop someone in their tracks by thrusting it at them. Smoking, oddly, helped too, because I rapidly got the habit of snatching a quick ciggie whenever and wherever I could, and talked to whoever (be they Valkyrie, mediaeval peasant or Fred Pohl) was doing the same thing.

Tell Martin *[Hoare]* I'm sorry I said YUK after kissing him on stage at the Hugos. Had meant to fall on ground gagging horribly, of course. Also, didn't have the heart to preface announcing you with "What's the Welsh for bor*ing*?" as planned. Felt I let the side down, rather. At the Hugo rehearsal, we were very firmly told not to say "And the winner is..." Winner implies losers, you see. So the PC thing to do afterwards from now on is the People To Whom The Hugos Did Not Go Party. Charlie Brown did not go to it (or at least not while I was there).

San Francisco was triff. Didn't get to see nearly enough of it. Favourite bit: the ruins of Sutro Baths, and the rocky beachlet (mussels and bloody great fleshy starfish – takes yer back to the Cornwall of childhood) just below....

Ansible #75, October 1993

1995: Dan Steffan

Dan Steffan attended Intersection in Glasgow, Scotland, the 1995 Worldcon. The rival candidates were Samanda b Jeudé and Joe Wesson.

Platform

TOP TEN REASONS TO VOTE FOR ME!

10] After 26 years in Fandom, I still believe that Fans are Slans (and that Sex Camps in the Ozarks deserve reconsideration).
9] I edited eight issues of *Boonfark.*
8] I was nominated for the Fanartist Hugo Award, even though my cat drew everything.
7] I co-edited 42 issues of *Pong*.
6] I promise to French-kiss D West.
5] I co-edited five issues of *Science Fiction Eye*.
4] My wife will show you her Tattoos.
3] I co-edit *BLAT!*
2] I've seen Ted White naked.
1] The drinks are on me!

Nominators: Ted White, Greg Pickersgill, Robert Lichtman, Dave Langford, Andy Hooper.

TAFFragment 1: Riding the TAFF Rails

Dan Steffan

They all laughed at us. All we wanted to do was take the train to Wales, but still they laughed.

"That's a four-and-a-half- or five-hour trip," scoffed John Harvey, after I'd told him about our travel plans. Lynn and I were sitting in the Harvey's lovely back garden, staring at the fishpond and trying to recover from our overnight flight. We were on our second bottle of white wine, I believe.

"And when are you planning to come back?" Eve asked incredulously.

"The next day," I replied. "We're taking the morning train out of King's Cross for Haverfordwest. We'll stay overnight with Greg and Catherine and then..."

"And then come back the next day?" John sputtered.

"...take the train back to London in time to catch a connection to Stevenage for Precursor," I continued.

"You realize," John said, shaking his head and jerking his thumb over his shoulder, "that Stevenage is about ten minutes away from here, don't you?"

"Of course," I lied. I had absolutely no idea.

"You're only in the country for a day and now you're going to spend most of the next two days sitting on a train?" My host rubbed his temples rhythmically. "I just don't get it," he muttered quietly to himself.

"What my dear, deranged husband means," Eve explained, dropping her cigarette butt into one of the empty wine bottles, "is that you're travelling halfway across the country *and back, just to end up in the Exact Same Place!* It doesn't make any goddamn sense."

"Eve! Listen to me!" I said sternly, grabbing her by the shoulders. "This is Fandom, damn it, it doesn't *have* to make sense." Eve, in turn, gave me her famous Yeah-Right-Pull-The-Other-One look.

So I took a deep breath and tried again. It was really just a matter of context, I explained. To them, our expedition to Wales was a journey of epic proportion – we were travelling most of the way across Britain, and

back again, *in only two days*. But to a couple of road-weary Colonials like Lynn and myself, the four-and-a-half-hour train ride was insignificant. In America you can't get anywhere in four-and-a-half hours. A train trip to New York City takes longer than that. Hell, in some parts of the United States it takes longer than that to get a pizza delivered.

The next morning, John and Eve graciously drove us to Stevenage to catch our train into London. They had failed to talk us out of our plans. John parked the car and led us towards the station. As we walked across the parking lot he directed my attention to the nearby Tesco supermarket. "The Precursor hotel is over there," he told me, "right behind the market."

"As you can see," Eve joined in, "the station really is right next to the con hotel." There was even a ramp that led directly from the station to the street in front of the Hertfordpark Hotel. "Are you sure you want to take this trip?"

I assured her that our minds were so well made up that they had military corners (and could easily pass the quarter test). But Eve still seemed to doubt our sanity.

"Don't think of it as a journey all the way across the country," Lynn said soothingly, "think of it as the world's longest hotel corridor and we're just going to a party at the far end of the corridor."

"Yeah," I joined in. "We'll be back as soon as the beer runs out." This seemed to soothe her and we were soon on our way.

I loved King's Cross station immediately. As we came up the stairs from the Underground I suddenly realized just where the hell I was. Great fucking Britain. The U fucking K. I was im-fucking-pressed. It all looked so authentic. The station itself was one of those majestic, arcane structures that just doesn't exist in America. It was part cathedral and part spiderweb – its great arched ceiling a latticework of steel girders. The waiting area was enormous and jammed with people swarming in every direction. Some hurried to catch waiting trains, while others wandered around the many small shops that were set up like native huts in a Tarzan movie across the huge station floor. In the middle of them was a large staircase that descended through an equally large opening in the floor into the station's nether regions.

It was so romantic that it took me quite a while to realize that a few things weren't quite what they seemed. The first thing I noticed were the people themselves: they didn't look right. Everywhere I looked I saw weird people with those nose rings and funny hair – *and that was just my wife!* I didn't see one person in a tweed suit. I didn't see any sailors or soldiers on furlough or a single Red Cross nurse. I didn't even see any

bowler hats. I didn't see any anguished lovers enveloped in billowing plumes of steam. Hell, I didn't see any billowing plumes of steam, period.

Yeah, that's right. No bloody clouds of steam. What a gyp! And, as if that weren't bad enough, the trains themselves did not have those cool exterior doors either. You know the ones I mean, those doors that open directly into each passenger compartment from the platform. In fact, the trains didn't have compartments at all, just rows of boring seats. I had expected to walk down long, narrow corridors of polished wood, but was crushed to find nothing but a pathetic aisle running down the middle of each car. There were no helpful Negro porters to take our bags, and there was no sign of anybody chasing even one of the Beatles.

What a disappointment. By the time we boarded and found our seats I was an emotional wreck. "Who would have thought," I said to Lynn through my tears, "that England would have forsaken the charms of the Age of Innocence?"

"Queen Victoria is dead, dear," said my wife. "Get over it."

Despite my shattered illusions, rail travel in the UK turned out to be convenient, affordable and, after a fashion, enjoyable. Our trip to Wales presented us with remarkable scenery, including the site of the Reading Festival and the remains of a fortress that Catherine McAuley assured us was called "Castle Llansteffan."

Every inch of the trip was a tableau of the landscapes that made artists like Turner and Constable famous. Everywhere we looked were sheep and farmhouses, sheep and haystacks, sheep and nuclear power plants, sheep and ancient ruins and, of course, sheep. It was a stunning panorama that left me with a real appreciation of the English countryside, and, for some reason, a craving for mint jelly.

My first impression, that we were riding on the European equivalent of Amtrak, was thoroughly dispelled by the unexpected appearance of a BritRail steward pushing a food cart up the aisle toward us. We watched in awestruck silence as he presented us with cold drinks, bags of crisps, and exotic delights like Chicken Tikka sandwiches.

"Toto," I said, nudging my wife, "I don't think we're in Kansas anymore."

Even when our transportation *wasn't* ultra-modern, it was, at the very least, always interesting – like the train we took on the last leg of our trip to Haverfordwest. Perhaps train is too strong a word to describe the vehicle that transported us out to the westernmost nub of the British Empire. Diesel Bus on Rails would be a better description. We transferred at Swansea, taking what appeared to be the local commuter train through

the Welsh countryside. Perhaps commuter train is too strong a word... Trolley Car with a Thyroid Condition would be a better description.

It was a large and awkward contraption that resembled a secondhand Lithuanian streetcar that drove like a dump truck full of gravel. As it propelled itself from village to village and town to town it lurched from side to side and rattled and squeaked like a cow in a blender. Periodically the engineer/driver could be heard actually shifting gears as we approached an incline and would rev up the motor to a deafening roar as we struggled uphill. At one point we actually stopped and turned around. It was the single most entertaining ride I've ever taken outside of an amusement park.

Our trip two weeks later to Scotland was considerably more conventional by comparison. That train was crowded, required reserved seating and seemed to take forever. It was Bank Holiday weekend and the train was jammed with sweaty Londoners trying to get Out of Town. If it weren't for the amusing companionship of Martin "Mr. Baseball" Smith I probably would have slept my way to Glasgow. (Which is, come to think of it, how Lynn got there, but that's another story.)

Glasgow's Central Station was another one of those amazing rail cathedrals with an elaborate glass ceiling and a waiting room the size of Montana. In fact, the waiting room was so large that our hotel, The Central, was tucked away in one corner of it. Our room Number 530, a no (*snicker*) smoking room, looked down on the station's glass and iron roof and provided a stunning view of Glasgow's Victorian roofscape.

At night the station's glass ceiling seemed to glow like a beautiful antique lamp, and in the morning the mellifluous voice of the station announcer would drift up through our window to gently wake us up.

Everywhere we travelled in Britain we travelled by rail. It didn't matter if it was on BritRail, commuter trains, or the Underground, it was immediately obvious that trains are still a vital part of life in the UK. I was greatly impressed by their faith in rail travel and the way it seemed so integrated into their lives.

In the United States rail travel is a necessary evil that exists to transport the country's underfinanced (and other such chattel) from one decaying urban center to another. The trains are in crappy condition and offer few comforts. If you have a ticket and there aren't any more seats, you are invited to stand in the aisle. If there isn't any room to stand in the aisle, you are told to stand at the end of the car near the toilets. If there is no room there, you can stand between the cars, etc. If you don't like it, tough. Save your money and buy an airplane ticket like normal people.

And another thing: Nobody *ever* comes down the aisle to offer you a yummy Lamb and Chutney sandwich, dammit.

I guess it all comes down to context, really. Just like I told Eve Harvey on our first evening in England. America is just too fucking big to make train travel an efficient means of transportation. It isn't convenient to spend four days on a train to Los Angeles when you can fly there in five or six hours.

Fortunately, the English *are* different. Great Britain is small enough to make it all feasible and reasonable. In five or six hours you can zip from one end of the country to the other and still leave the train with most of the feeling in your extremities. In the States the railroads are considered a leftover artifact from another time. Trains are still in use only because they haven't figured out what to do instead. (Though the bigwigs do have high hopes for that Beam Me Up thingee from *Star Trek*.)

Imagining England without trains is an unthinkable proposition, but in the USA it is inevitable.

Maybe the British haven't forgotten about the Age of Innocence after all.

Apparatchik #53, 15 February 1996

TAFFragment 2: You Can't Get There from Here

Dan Steffan

Getting around London is a delightfully odd experience. You only have to look at a map of the Underground to know what I mean – it looks more like a circuit board than a map. And yet, on a practical level, it all seems to work beautifully.

Okay, okay. I know. It isn't really all that wonderful. There are lots of bad things about the London Underground too, but I still think the charms far outweigh the shortcomings. Sure, the platforms are too narrow, but the stations and tunnels have so much *joie de vivre* that it doesn't really matter. You can't get that kind of atmosphere in the US anymore, and I think it should be preserved. If that means the occasional loss of a couple of over-crowded pensioners, so be it. That's the cost of living in an antique city.

It is true that the tunnels and stairways can be pretty confusing at times, and the rush to catch your train can be like running with the bulls in Pamplona, but that's the price we must sometimes pay for the privilege of traveling from place to place without the aid of horses.

Some commuters complain about the stink of urine in the passageways and stairwells. Night after night they curse the poor ragamuffins that linger in the corridors. They pass them by without ever realizing that they, too, once had jobs and homes, only to have lost them one sad day when they took a wrong turn in the tunnels deep beneath Tottenham Court Road and were never heard from again. These are the dispossessed. They gotta pee somewhere.

Without the quaint homeless folks and the crowded tube platforms, the London Underground would just be another colourless and odorless network of featureless, boring, subterranean cattle cars. (Sort of like the Washington, DC subway system.) Those commuters don't know a good thing when they've got it.

Personally, Lynn and I had absolutely no problems with the Underground during our visit to London. Sure, it would have been more convenient if the trains ran after midnight, but we were usually so exhausted after a day spent exploring the Tate or the British Museum, that

it really didn't make that much of a difference. We were usually collapsed in a heap somewhere, well before the tube stations closed.

Throughout our stay in London there was the constant threat of a tube strike. Employees were proposing a work stoppage unless the Transit Authority met their demands for better pay and shorter hours. Twice during our visit, strike days were announced, only to be postponed by last minute negotiations. A third strike deadline was then scheduled for what was to be our last evening in the UK and caused us no end of worry. In the days before the deadline, the television and radio news broadcasts were loaded with strike predictions and glib fantasies about the chaos that would follow.

"Shit," said Lynn. "Shit, shit," said Frank. "Somebody just kill me," said Dan.

The news programs were predicting a thirty to fifty percent shutdown of service, and we took them at their word. We had planned to do a great deal of travelling around the city on our last evening – including a small farewell gathering at a London pub – and feared the strike was going to interfere with our fun. So we decided to change our departure plans and ended up spending our last night at a hotel near Heathrow Airport, outside of London. We had booked an early Friday morning flight from Heathrow to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport and figured it would be a lot easier making it to our plane if we didn't have to worry about the tube strike.

Even in the best of times an early morning commute from Rob and Avedon's in East Ham all the way out to Heathrow can take close to an hour-and-a-half (maybe longer when you factor in the hassles of transporting our many large, fanzine-laden pieces of luggage), so it made sense to prepare for the inevitable Catch-22 that was headed our way. Prior to this, all our traveling had gone off without a hitch. No booking difficulties, no horrible delays or inconveniences, no nothing. In fact, everything had been going so smoothly that I had, quite naturally, been waiting for the other shoe to drop. I knew it would happen sooner or later, so we took evasive action. Believe me, I know incoming footwear when I see it.

First, we cancelled our final day of museum touring and devoted ourselves to the journey to Heathrow and our "nearby" hotel, The Ambassador Heathrow. The trip from East Ham lived up to expectations and was the closest thing to sheer Hell that I experienced during the whole of my TAFF trip. (Not counting the horrible sight of Greg Pickersgill's butt-crack, that is. But that's another story...) The Underground was very crowded that Thursday morning. At times there was barely room enough

for the three of us, and even less room for our rapidly replicating baggage. (There seemed to be another bag to carry every time I turned around, dammit.) At one point, just in order to change trains, we had to hire a team of elephants to drag our luggage from one platform to the next.

By the time we reached the airport we had accumulated so many suitcases and bags that we were forced to pay a tribe of renegade pygmy Elvis-impersonating bellhops to assist us in carrying everything to the spot where the hotel van was supposed to pick us up. The line of small, brown, jumpsuited African stewards stretched from one end of the airport to the other – each one of them with a knapsack or a make-up case balanced on his carefully sculpted pompadour. By the time we reached the hotel our luggage had assumed epic proportions and we were forced to get them their own room.

We got back into London around 5 p.m. and headed for the giant HMV music store on Oxford Street, where former Stranglers frontman Hugh Cornwell was performing a free, live show to promote the release of his latest solo album. Our timing was perfect. We got there about five minutes before the show started and enjoyed a set that included several Stranglers songs and a really powerful cover of John Lennon's "Cold Turkey." We followed the performance with an astonishing dinner in a nearby Korean restaurant called Arirang, on Poland Street. (It's always a good sign when you're the only Caucasians in the joint.) After the meal we waddled off to meet up with folks at the Yorkshire Grey.

The Yorkshire Grey is one of London fandom's regular meeting places these days and our final night happened to fall on one of their regularly scheduled Thursday night gatherings. We took advantage of this synchronicity and, at Rob Hansen's suggestion, turned it into a farewell party. We met up with Christina Lake (Christ In A Lake?) outside the pub. She had come down from Bristol that afternoon to hang out with us. Christina had decided to bop over to Amsterdam with Frank, Lynn, and me for a couple extra days of fun before we headed back to the States.

In the time it took me to drink my first two lagers, we were joined by a group of other visiting fans and a generous sprinkling of London homeys. Moshe Feder and Lise Eisenberg, who were staying in Britain for another week or two, arrived with Rob and Avedon. Pascal Thomas and his girlfriend (wife?) showed up, as did John and Eve Harvey, and the always smoking Abi Frost. Coughing heartthrob Martin Smith talked baseball with expatriate/rockstar/diplomat/best-selling author/nutbag Jim Young, while international luvbug Owen Whiteoak did his impressive Marcel Marceau impersonation.

In the time it took me to drink ten more lagers, we had to depart for our hotel. It was an hour's trip from the pub to Heathrow, so we had to leave a lot sooner than we would have liked to. (Yeah, about two weeks sooner!) The newspapers were still predicting a tube strike for the morning rush hour, but it didn't interfere with our commute. That trip to the airport was the only time during our visit that the Underground looked deserted. Ours was the last train to stop at most of the stations on our route. By the time we reached the end of the line, we were practically the only people on the train. The airport was empty, too. Our trip seemed irreversibly over.

After a short wait the hotel car arrived to take us to our "nearby" accommodations. With the driver's help, and the assistance of a handy crowbar, Lynn and I managed to interrupt Frank and Christina long enough to get them into the van and get them back to their room. Upon our arrival we discovered that our luggage – which had continued to multiply itself in our absence – was now being housed in its own suite of rooms and was busy running up a big room service bill. The next morning the hotel staff actually wept as they loaded the bags onto the flatbed trucks that carted them off to the airport. As they waved good-bye to us, they tearfully promised to name a new wing of the hotel after us and pledged to tell their children about us and our legendary luggage.

The flight to Amsterdam was flawless. The airline had complained that we were an itty bit over the 40 lb limit and forced us to divest ourselves of some of our souvenirs. I was quite upset at the prospect of leaving behind a few of the mementoes that had come to mean so much to me during our visit. (I know I'll always regret sending that Rosetta Stone thingie back to the British Museum. It would have made a damned fine coffee table, dammit.) But I took it like a man and fought back the tears. I knew there would always be a next time.

Besides, I already had plans to help myself to a couple of those little Vermeer paintings I'd seen on my last trip to Holland. I knew they'd make real nice placemats for the breakfast nook. So even though I was sad about having to leave Britain after three whirlwind weeks of adventure, at least I still had something to look forward to.

Apparatchik #54, 29 February 1996

TAFFragment 3: Leave the Driving to Us

Dan Steffan

I hate luggage. I hate the idea that my whole world is supposed to be stuffed into it. I hate the nagging fear that I've left one of them behind or forgotten to pack something essential. I hate remembering what I've forgotten. I hate when they *don't* come rolling down the damned conveyor belt. I hate getting a claim check for my baggage, and *never* having anyone ask to see it. I hate the fact that they're never big enough to begin with and always seem to have shrunk by the end. I hate the aroma of two weeks worth of socks and undies. I hate the way my duffelbag looks next to your Louis Vuitton.

But the thing I hate the absolute most about luggage is carrying it. I hate everything about it. The very idea of it makes me nauseous. Lugging bags and suitcases up hills and through train stations is not my idea of a good time. Toting totebags and backpacks leaves me feeling equine. Suitcases with wheels are a joke. (If the Samsonite Corporation wants to give me a break they should never have stopped with just two little wheels – they should have added a seat and a mini-bar. Now *that* would be a useful suitcase.) Hell, I'd probably support the return of slavery if it meant a plentiful supply of porters.

If the truth were told, I'd have to say that the prospect of living out of my suitcase for three weeks was, in fact, the only part of my TAFF trip I wasn't looking forward to.

Once we'd actually arrived in England, Lynn and I knew what lay ahead of us and did our best to avoid the Backbreaking Hell of Luggage Transport whenever possible. Our first test occurred when John and Eve Harvey met our 7:00 a.m. flight at Heathrow Airport. Fortunately, airports aren't much of a challenge – I simply grabbed a luggage cart in baggage claim and wheeled our cumbersome duffelbags right into the garage and right into the boot of the Harvey's car. I didn't even break a sweat.

When we ran off to Wales the next day we once again avoided any serious lifting by leaving the bulk of our luggage behind with John and Eve. We took a smaller bag with us knowing that we were only going to be gone overnight and would be returning directly to the Precursor hotel in

Stevenage. John and Eve had consented to bring our bags with them to the hotel for the convention and had graciously brought them up to their room on the seventh floor. When we finally checked into the Hertfordpark Hotel on Friday afternoon, I had only to carry the bags two doors down the hallway to our room. So far, so good.

After the Precursor softball game on Sunday I had a conversation with Jack Heneghan, who'd been in England for almost a month on a business trip, and discovered that he was driving to London that evening to spend the night with Rob and Avedon in East Ham. We were scheduled to follow suit the next day – as were Andy Hooper and Carrie Root – and managed, with the assistance of sixty or seventy beers, to talk Jack into driving all of our collective baggage down to London with him that night. His agreement guaranteed Lynn and me another luggage-free trip through London. Our plan was working.

In the week that followed, we made daily trips from Hotel Hansen into the heart of London to meet our Native Guide, Martin "The Babe" Smith, to tour museums, drink beer, visit shops (like the Tintin Shoppe in Covent Garden), drink beer, eat in some interesting restaurants, and, occasionally, drink some beer.

Martin had taken an extra week off from work to "hang out with the Americans" and treated us to a personalized journey through the city's maze of streets and pubs. He even accompanied us when we played Ugly American Tourists, visiting the Tower of London and the Crown Jewels. Martin's good-humoured patience and friendship was one of the highlights of our visit to the UK.

We were scheduled to leave for Glasgow on Thursday morning. Up until that time we had managed to avoid carrying our luggage any further than it took to put them into someone's trunk. But now we had a problem. There was no avoiding it any longer. There were bags to be carried and nobody but us to carry them. Unless...

"What if we take a taxi to the train station?" I asked my wife over the teetering pile of duffelbags and backpacks. "We could go to that mini-cab office up the street and get a taxi," I suggested. The mini-cab office was near the tube station and we'd walked past it a dozen times that week.

"Do you think it will be all right?" Lynn asked, remembering all those episodes of *Eastenders* she'd seen. "Are you sure they can get us there in time?"

"Of course they can," I said, trying to forget all those episodes of *Eastenders* I'd seen. "They're professionals. What could go wrong?"

The next morning, a couple of hours before our train was due to

depart, we carried our bags the two blocks to the mini-cab stand for our ride to Euston Station. I figured that I could carry the damned things that far, if it meant I wouldn't have to touch them again until we reached our train. Fortunately, our cab was ready and waiting. "This is a good sign," I told Lynn. "Famous last words," she replied.

Despite her cynicism, things seemed to be going smoothly. The Pakistani owner of the cab stand spoke Pakistani to our Pakistani driver (the only thing I understood was the mention of Euston Station) and they nodded to each other in agreement. My momentary worries about a potential language barrier proved unnecessary when the driver greeted us warmly and commented on the unusually hot weather.

Traffic was heavy, but I wasn't worried. We'd left plenty of time for any problems that might occur. I just sat back and enjoyed the scenery (even the slums are quaint in England). After a while I leaned forward in my seat and tried making small talk with the driver. I had driven a cab in the States for a while in the Seventies and was curious to find out some of the interesting tidbits about driving in London. "How do you like being a mini-cab driver?" I asked him. "Is it a good way to make a living."

"I don't know yet," he answered. "I have only been driving for three days."

A sudden look of panic spread across Lynn's face.

"You are going to Euston Station, yes?" he asked us a moment later. I smiled weakly and confirmed that we were indeed going to Euston Station. "Okay," he said confidently, waving his *London A to Z*. "You can tell me how to get there, yes?"

I let out a scream that only dogs could hear.

An hour and forty minutes later we pulled up in front of Euston Station, with about twenty minutes left to catch our train to Scotland. Shaken, but relieved, we ran through the station, gleefully dragging our luggage behind us.

We met up with our traveling companion, Martin "He Won't Leave" Smith, shortly after finding our seats and regaled him with our morning's trauma. Martin laughed and laughed. And laughed. Finally, we were forced to change seats and pretend we didn't know him for the rest of the trip. But still he laughed. (I secretly vowed to take revenge on him for his insulting behavior and did so at my first opportunity. Hah! To this day Martin still thinks he "lost" his wallet at the convention in Glasgow. That'll teach him!)

Fortunately, the day's horrors were over. Our Glasgow hotel was actually part of the rail station and required no suitcase hauling in order to

reach our room. After that, the only heavy lifting we did during our stay involved pint glasses of lager.

We returned to London a week later, traveling this time in the company of Frank Lunney. Frank had flown to Glasgow for the convention and travelled south with us. The train trip itself took about five and a half hours – most of which was spent next to two evil children who were having Much Too Much Fun with the automatic doors – and left us exhausted upon our arrival back in Euston Station.

We had once again made reservations at Hotel Hansen but decided that we were too tired to battle the subway with all of our post-Worldcon bags, sacks, envelopes, luggage and whiskey bottles, etc., and elected to try our luck with another taxicab. "Only *this* time," I declared, "we're taking a *real* London taxi – NOT one of those damned mini-cabs." So we hauled all six thousand of our suitcases down to the taxi stand and waited our turn in line.

It took about fifteen minutes to reach the top of the line, by which time we were all beginning to slip into a post-Worldcon coma. The sight of our cab pulling up towards us was quite a relief.

As the car rolled to a stop a few feet in front of us, we were all jerked back to reality when it suddenly slammed into the curb and jumped up onto the pavement. It came right at us, screeching to a halt within inches of our precious suitcases. The tall, pale, red-headed driver apologized profusely for nearly running us down and hopped out of the cab to load up our many bags. Despite his slight build the driver displayed considerable strength as he piled our luggage into the trunk with one hand. We gave him Rob and Avedon's address and slumped back in our seats for one of London's legendary taxi drivers – reportedly the best trained cabbies in the world.

"I'm sorry about the disturbance back there in the station, folks," said the cab driver, stopping at a red light. "It's just that I've been having some trouble today," he continued sheepishly. "I don't know what the problem is."

Then he held up his left arm for all of us to see. It was badly swollen and red in colour. It seemed to be pointing a bit too much to the left at a very unnatural angle. "Does this look broken to you?" he asked.

Lynn started to laugh uncontrollably. "Here we go again," she said. "Here we go again."

Apparatchik #59, 9 May 1996

TAFFragment 4: Go West, Young Fan

Dan Steffan

Our trip to Wales was flawless. We pulled into the station right on time. It was a tiny, brick kiosk that seemed indistinguishable from those that had preceded it. Only the small white signs at either end of the building set it apart from the others. Haverfordwest, the signs said.

The platform was deserted except for our fellow passengers (all five of them). There was no sign of Greg Pickersgill or of anyone who might presumably be his significant other, Catherine McAulay. Lynn and I had played host to Gregory during his own TAFF trip in 1986, but had never met Catherine – so she could have been *anybody*. I didn't want to look foolish by going home with the wrong Welshman. But since there wasn't anybody waiting for us the point was moot.

It was a warm and bright afternoon in August and Lynn's pale blue hair seemed to be in competition with the cloudless sky. As we stepped out of the station I wondered if we'd look out of place in this little village so far from home. Was this going to be the start of a grand adventure or a pitiful humiliation? Would I regret something as impulsive as this one-day trip to Wales? What if Ed McMahon came to our house with that big check for a million dollars and *we weren't home*? That would just be my goddamn luck.

Moments after hitting the sidewalk in front of the station a small red car stopped in front of us and Greg Pickersgill got out. He looked much like I'd remembered him, with a touch of grey thrown in for drama. Catherine was behind the wheel and greeted us so warmly that I immediately felt a kinship with her.

She explained that they had been delayed because they hadn't been able to decide whether to walk or drive to the station. Their house was so nearby that driving seemed silly, but not knowing how much luggage we might be packing, the car was the logical choice. I was happy to ride to the house, but soon came to understand their debate. The actual trip took no more than two minutes and once we got there I could actually see the train station from their front door. Driving *did* seem silly. Fortunately for everyone involved, I am a very silly person.

Their house at 3 Bethany Row is actually two houses joined by a common wall. They had always been two separate homes until Gregory and Catherine moved in (Greg had actually lived in one side of the house as a child), but since so much room was needed for the library and the computers and the fanzines and the other collections, they moved into both houses. A brilliant solution that provided them adequate space, a big lush garden, separate offices and, luckily for us, a guest room.

The only real drawback is one of access between the houses. The landlord refused to allow Gregory to put a door in the wall that divides them, which means that one must step outside into the back garden to go from one side of the house to the other. This proved to be something of an annoyance for our hosts, but was only a minor inconvenience for Lynn and I. In fact, we ended up having one of the houses (the right side) to ourselves – the guest bedroom being in one house while Catherine and Greg's room was in the other. Hospitality is one thing, but nobody has ever put us up in an entire house before. I was impressed.

After a few minutes of exploring the house(s) and meeting the cats, our hosts led us on a guided walking tour of their town. We wandered past the train station and down the hill into Haverfordwest. The streets were narrow and would probably be described in *Fodor's* as "quaint and charming," but I couldn't help noticing a quiet sadness about the place. Too many storefronts were closed down and the only people on the streets seemed to be the young and the elderly. Our journey took us along many picturesque canals and over several old stone bridges that seemed remarkable only because of the presence of an unusual number of shopping carts that lay at the bottom of the shallow water. A testimony to the boredom of Welsh teenagers, no doubt.

The highlight (literally!) of the afternoon's tour of Haverfordwest was our visit to the impressive ruins of the 12th Century Norman castle that dominates the local landscape. Built on a bluff that overlooks the entire countryside, the castle defended the shipping interests of several different conquerors over the centuries. Today, the great skeleton of a fortress is a tourist attraction – when there are any tourists – whose thick stone walls belie any concerns I might have had about the demise of the people of Wales. (As long as that castle stands, there will always be a need for at least one person to cut the grass and pick up the cigarette butts.)

In spite of my cynicism, I was impressed by the ruins. I always get a special feeling when I make contact with aged things and this was no exception. I sometimes imagine that I can detect the latent energy left behind by the centuries of mankind's passing parade. How many feet had

walked up the steps of that 800-year-old fortress before mine? How many sets of lungs were left breathless by the incline before mine?

Next to the fortress is another old building that had once been a local prison. (It now houses offices for lawyers or the government or some other appropriately ironic agency.) By coincidence, I had also taken Gregory to visit a local Virginia prison during his TAFF trip. Apparently he had decided to return the favor – though this time we didn't see any sign of E.B. Frohvet's favorite ex-con. I wonder how many other TAFF winners have visited (if you'll excuse the expression) penal facilities during their TAFF trips?

Visiting castles and prisons always gives me a powerful thirst. When I noticed the specks of white foam in the corners of Greg's mouth I knew it was time for a beer. Everyone agreed and Catherine led the way down the hill from the ruins and took us down winding streets to an acceptable pub. Along the way we passed several other establishments that were rejected by our hosts.

"That one's a fucking shithole," said Gregory.

"Yuppie Wine Bar," said Catherine at the next.

"Wannabe Biker Bar," said Gregory about another.

We ended up in a pleasant, but mostly empty pub in the midst of Haverfordwest's shopping district. The booths were comfortable and the drinks were cold. Greg and I gossiped and lied about everyone we could think of. I asked him what Chuck Connors' problem was and he asked me what was wrong with Guy Lillian. Gregory told me about Don West and I told him about Andy Hooper. We talked about fanzines and fandom and all the great things that were going to get done just as soon as one of us won the lottery. I'm not sure what Lynn and Catherine were talking about, but it probably had something to do with what pathetic dreamers fanboys can be and how small our printruns really are. You know, girl talk.

We moved on to another local bar after a short walk along the length of Haverfordwest's impressive Aquatic Shopping Cart Exhibit. It had been an unseasonably hot afternoon and we all welcomed the opportunity to get out of the sun. By this time any apprehensions we'd had about getting along with our hosts had disappeared. We had gotten through the awkward perfunctory conversations – and several pints of Guinness – and found that we still had plenty to talk about. In fact, we didn't shut up until we got back on the train the next morning.

Dinner that night was superb. Catherine's skills in the kitchen elevated her to goddesshood with every bite I ate. Fresh Cockles and Sea Trout, New Potatoes served with freshly-made Mayonnaise, Salad, and

several home-made Pizzas. It was the most memorable meal of our trip, though there were others that I shall never forget.

Gregory and Catherine's house is a treasure trove of fannish delights. Everywhere I looked there were books and fanzines. The walls of the bedroom we slept in were layered with interesting Piles O' Stuff. Over by the window was a set of British SF Book Club hardcovers. By the door a probably complete run of the slick music magazine, *Q*. On the nightstand a conveniently located pile of *Hyphen* sat basking in the shadow of a life-size replica of Jophan's Shield of Umor.

Orderly stacks of fanzines huddled on shelves in the hallway that passes Catherine's office. The mixture of dark wood shelving and loud book jackets gave the sitting room a warm, inviting glow. Gregory showed me several paintings by D. West, a man known in some circles for his yellow fingers and his pink eyes.

"This painting proves that Don is really fandom's only true renaissance man," I marvelled.

"Yes, it's true," Greg sighed. "But I just wish he wouldn't go around town in those bloody tights all the time."

"There are some things that man was not meant to know," I agreed.

I met the entire membership of Haverfordwest fandom that night when we were joined by David Redd, noted author and third wheel. He arrived carrying an eight-pack of ale that never seemed to run dry. Before David had arrived we'd finished off a bottle of wine and many bottles of lager, but once he'd joined us the real drinking began. Empty bottles began piling up in the corners. At one point Catherine produced a bottle of locally-made Mead for our consumption. It was astonishingly good. Usually I dislike overly sweet wines and liquors, but that bottle of honey Mead went down like ambrosia. Periodically David would pull another bottle out of his eight-pack and offer it to one of us. Before long his feet became obscured by the pile of little green ale bottles, and yet there was always another lurking inside the box.

David talked about the reality of being a very slow writer while trying to raise a family and the necessity of having a job in the real world to make ends meet. I explained that it was much the same for would-be artists like myself. Between gulps of beer we discussed the frustrating way that working for a living interferes with Real Creativity. Catch-22. David talked eloquently about unfinished short stories and how they are like bouts of unrequited love. I talked drunkenly about unfinished comic strips and how they are like piles of expensive paper sitting in the corner gathering dust. Lynn looked at me like I was crazy, but handed me another

beer anyway.

It was 4:00 a.m. when David took the last couple bottles of his ale and vanished into the night. Greg and I had been sprawled on the floor for several hours by that point, but continued our discourse whenever we made eye contact over the mountains of beer bottles.

We discussed how important it can be to separate a fan's creative endeavours from his often peculiar and sometimes offensive personality. We discussed Richard Bergeron's brilliance as a faneditor and fanzine packager in contrast to his more disappointing personality flaws. Greg talked about getting his copy of *Warhoon* 28 long after the brouhaha known as Topic A had taken place. Despite all that distasteful unpleasantness, he was utterly astonished by the scope and quality of the book he held in his hands. It exhibited none of the bile and bias that, unfortunately, Richard Bergeron is known for today. It was a work filled with love and respect.

"What a fucking waste," Greg sighed. "What a loss to fandom."

"Yes," I agreed. "But you know what this means, don't you?"

"You mean?" Greg asked from somewhere behind a great pile of empties.

"Yes, that's right," I answered. "There's still hope for you and me."

We exchanged many important theories about life that night, and if either of us had been able to remember them the next morning this would be a better world to live in.

We left the next day after a couple cups of coffee and about five hours of sleep. Before leaving I was granted access to Greg's fanzine preservation project, The Memory Hole, and allowed to liberate duplicate copies of many fine fanzines for my own collection. This kind of generosity made me appreciate Gregory and his love of fanzines all over again. His belief in the legitimate power of fanzine publishing inspired me and left me feeling, at the same time, like I was playing out of my league. I have yet to adequately repay him.

As we pulled out of the station for our return trip to London I turned to my wife and smiled with satisfaction. I could hardly believe our good luck. Haverfordwest fandom had welcomed us with open arms and drank with us until we were legless. No one screamed at anyone. No furniture was broken. No one pointed and laughed. No one vomited. No one was glad that we were leaving. It was hard to believe that we'd been in the UK for less than three days.

Our trip to Wales was flawless.

Apparatchik #62, 20 June 1996

TAFFragment 5: Hotel Hansen (The Early Years)

Dan Steffan

For the first time, since our arrival in England, I had the feeling that I'd stumbled into an episode of *EastEnders*. Leaving the Upton Park tube station near Rob and Avedon's house in East Ham was like stepping directly into a version of London life that I'd seen only on television.

Unlike the idyllic suburbia of Stevenage, East Ham was the Real Thing. There were no shiny, modern supermarkets here; no hotels or parking garages, either. Instead, the sidewalks outside the station were crowded with stalls selling fruits and vegetables to the passing parade of little brown women and their little brown children. Cramped shops lined the street selling everything from ugly shoes to ugly fish and chips. Minicars jammed themselves into unlikely parking places in between the street vendors, while others honked angrily as they whizzed past us, heading down Green Street in the wrong direction.

I stared in amazement at the wild mixture of ethnicity. African women in Dashikis and Hindu men in Turbans stood elbow-to-elbow with pale Punkers and roasted Rastas. It was an exotic stew of different accents, attitudes and aromas. Television had prepared me for the first two ingredients, but I was not prepared for the third. The way the air smelled that afternoon was unforgettable. It was like inhaling next to an incontinent camel standing in the middle of a field of rotting papayas – subtly sweet, yet urine-like. It brings a tear to my eye just thinking about it.

We'd travelled from Stevenage in the company of Andy Hooper and Carrie Root (who also had reservations at the Hotel Hansen for that evening), and Ted and Lynda White, who'd come into London for the day (but were staying with John and Eve Harvey before the worldcon). We'd sent most of our luggage to Rob and Avedon's the previous evening in Jack Heneghan's car, which made the train ride a lot easier and the walk down Plashet Grove to 144 a breeze. Ted led the way. He'd stayed there on a couple of previous visits to Britain and felt confident in his role as Wagon Master. "Fanboys Ho!"

Rob met us at the door and said something about being surprised to actually see me up before Noon. "Ordinarily I don't like to be seen in the

daylight," I replied. "It's bad for my tattoos."

"Well, then you've come to the right place," Rob chuckled. But before I could get him to explain himself I heard an impatient whine from over my shoulder.

"Are you two going to stand there trading bon mots all day," asked Andy, "or can the rest of us come in the house, too?"

Rob and Avedon's house sits at the end of a long, curving street lined with identical row houses. Built near the end of the 1800s, the houses have a quaint Victorian charm, marred only by bad paint jobs and needless decay. Like most of the houses we visited in Britain, their house was remarkably narrow. A narrow sitting room, narrow stairs, a narrow dining room, and, as it turned out, a very narrow entrance hall.

"Step aside or I'm going over the top of you," growled Andy.

A glance over my shoulder was met by the sight of five sweaty and frustrated faces – one of which looked a lot like a shaved Polar bear in a baseball cap. Without realizing it, I had stopped the flow of fannish bodies into the narrow hallway by simply pausing to chat with our host. With an apologetic shrug I stepped out of the way and into the dining room; my embarrassment having had the desired laxative effect. The flow of non-TAFF winners had been restored and soon everybody was able to get inside out of the heat.

We found Avedon sitting at the dining table with a deck of cards in her hand. Smoke from her ever-present cigarette curled lazily through the sunlight that poured through the dining room windows (the advantage of being in the end house) and made me think – just for a nanosecond, mind you – that she had just materialized out of nowhere. She reminded me of a gypsy fortune teller on her day off.

Sitting at the table with her was a friend of Avedon's, a co-conspirator from Women Against Censorship, named Cherie Matrix. Cherie was the reason Rob had told me that I'd "come to the right place." Cherie is, to put it mildly, a strikingly beautiful woman who just happens to be a tattooing and piercing enthusiast. In fact, within minutes of meeting her I realized that I recognized some of her tattoos from books and magazines. The artwork on her body is by some of the best tattoo artists in the world and we immediately fell into a conversation about body art.

"This one is by Alex Binnie," Cherie told me.

"I love his work," I told her nonchalantly, trying not to stare. "I'm hoping to get an appointment with him while I'm in London."

"Oh, he's a friend of mine," Cherie replied, flashing the jewelled stud in her tongue. "Maybe I can get you in to see him."

"Hey, Dan!" Avedon broke in, having apparently noticed that I was standing there with my mouth hanging open. "Cherie's got seven rings in her pussy."

"That would be really great," I told her, trying to ignore Avedon's taunts. "Anything you could do would be really – um – great." I was losing my ability to speak.

"He's always booked up for months ahead of time. You'd never get in to see him otherwise," Cherie said, picking up on Avedon's game and tugging on her Labret absentmindedly.

"She's got nipples the size of your thumb, Dan," my hostess cackled, lighting a fresh cigarette. "Her nipple rings actually make 'em bend in the middle."

"Great," I groaned, my knees growing weak. "Grate. Grape. Grphh."

I knew I was through. These two women had reduced me to Jerry Lewis in less than ten minutes. Avedon *really* knows how to make her old friends feel at home. Sigh. I quickly found a nearby chair and sat down to lick my wounds. The next hour was spent quietly playing Fan Tan with the evil (and definitely still rude) Ms. Carol and Cherie's adolescent daughter, Raven Isis.

Naturally, I lost.

Martin Smith arrived soon after my defeat and it was, thankfully, time to venture off for Rob's world famous Fannish Landmarks and Pub Crawl. Avedon and Cherie stayed behind to continue their brainstorming for ways to make the world safe for pornography. The rest of us – including Ted, Lynda, Rob, Martin, Lynn, and Carrie – took the Underground into London to the Forbidden Planet bookstore, where we'd arranged to meet Andy.

He had decided earlier that day to go into London ahead of us to tour a military museum he wanted to see and then join us for the Pub Crawl. We picked Forbidden Planet because it was centrally located (on Oxford Street) and offered lots of distractions to occupy us while we waited for him. But Andy never showed up. Even after ample browsing and generous milling about on the sidewalk, he was still nowhere to be found.

Finally, we decided not to wait any longer. Rob reckoned that Andy would show up eventually and convinced Martin to stay behind to wait for him. Being the only other Native, Martin knew the tour and where to meet up with us when Hapless Hooper finally made an appearance. As we walked away, I looked back in Martin's direction and saw him waving, a brave smile stretched across his little face.

Despite the unseasonable heat, we covered a lot of ground that

afternoon. Rob had given this tour on a number of occasions and showed us sights and sites heretofore unknown to most of us – though Ted had gone along in 1987. We saw the Bonnington Hotel, birthplace of TAFF, and the once legendary One Tun. We walked by a nondescript modern building that had been the site of most pre-war English fan meetings, until it was levelled by a buzz bomb, and saw the windows of the top floor apartment where Arthur C. Clarke and Ted Carnell once held court.

Along the way, Lynn stepped into an open utility hole in the sidewalk and tumbled to the pavement, breaking our camera (though we didn't know it until the next day) and scuffing up her shoes. Fortunately, she didn't hurt herself.

We ended up at the Yorkshire Grey, a pub that is the current home to London fandom's weekly gatherings. Moments after our arrival Andy and Martin showed up, having traced our steps from Forbidden Planet. "What the hell happened to you?" I asked a very sweaty Andy, in between gulps of a lovely cold beer. "Did you get lost?"

"No," replied everyone's favorite Shrimp Brother, "it just took a lot longer than I expected to get here from the museum."

"Why didn't you hop on the subway?" I inquired.

"I didn't think it was going to be that far," Andy sheepishly replied. "It was only about two inches on the map."

We got back to Hotel Hansen around dusk, having said goodbye to Martin and sent Ted and Lynda back to the Harvey's along the way. Cherie and her daughter were still sitting at the dining table with Avedon when we walked in, as was another guest, Neil Rest. Neil had just arrived in London from Amsterdam and was full of stories about the city where All Old Hippies Go To Die. (His anecdotes made me miss my bong.) Naturally, this led to a discussion of dinner and where one could obtain it. The locals compared notes and suggested we go to a nearby Indian and Sri Lankan restaurant that they'd enjoyed in the past. Andy was excited about the prospect of food, as were the rest of us, but the logistics of the situation proved troublesome.

The restaurant was too far away for the nine of us to walk to, but not far away enough to take the Underground. Rob had the only car among us and there was no way we were going to all fit into it at the same time. Hell, Andy and I couldn't fit into it together – forget about an additional six others. We were stymied. Andy sweated, Cherie played with her lip ring, I drooled. Finally Avedon stood up from the table – proving to me for the first time since my arrival that she did indeed still have legs – and solved our problem. "You're just gonna have to make three trips, Hansen," she

declared. Which is exactly what happened. She has Rob well trained.

I was part of the last batch of passengers to reach The Yaal, a small eatery located in nearby Barking (home of "Barking Car Sales"). There was only one other couple in the place when we arrived and the rest of our party already had their heads buried in the menu. A couple of employees stood around waiting to take our order. This was going to be good.

Two hours later, our dinners had yet to arrive.

In the meantime, chaos had broken out at our table. Every scrap of Poori and Chapati had been consumed. Every drop of Raita licked from the bowls, and a few napkins were missing, too. Andy's blood sugar was dropping like the New Year's ball in Times Square. Small talk had been exhausted and we were beginning to learn way too much about each other.

Avedon admitted that she had recently shaved her legs for the first time in more than a decade. Neil talked about being AWOL from the Army and trying to levitate the Pentagon. Cherie talked about ex-boyfriends and bemoaned her one-time choice of Axl Rose over Kurt Cobain. And Andy mentioned something about deep frying rodents during his tenure with Taco Bell. I, on the other hand, had nothing to add to the conversation, preferring to do my impression of The Ugly American by screaming at the waiters.

When the food finally did arrive it was delicious, but by then nobody really seemed to care. Dinner was consumed quickly and silently in an effort to Just Get It Over With.

Outside the restaurant we started to walk, en masse, back to Rob and Avedon's. We'd agreed that Rob should drive Cherie and Isis to the Tube station directly from the restaurant, so they could get home before the Underground shut down for the night. Afterwards, he intercepted us about halfway home and shuttled a second carload back to the house. By the time he came back and got Lynn and I, it was almost midnight.

Once back at Hotel Hansen, we all just sort of sat around in a daze for a while and then, one by one, took turns standing under the shower. The day's heat had lingered into the evening and had left us all a bit wilted. Nevertheless, fannish responsibility reared its ugly head and, to everyone's amazement, actual fanac took place. Andy had vowed to commit the events of the weekend to paper for an issue of *Apparatchik* he planned to publish when we reached Glasgow and nothing I said could dissuade him. This was his only opportunity, he explained, because he and Carrie would be gone in the morning – off on a trip to visit relatives. He was going to pub his ish and nobody was going to stop him. I felt so guilty I volunteered to draw a comic strip for him on the spot. The bastard accepted.

About an hour later, I looked in on him to check up on his progress. When I walked into Avedon's office I felt like I had stepped into an outtake from *Apocalypse Now*. Andy was sitting at the computer like a fannish version of Colonel Kurtz, a white towel wrapped around his head to catch the rivulets of sweat that ran down his face. The room was like an oven and I think I spotted a small lizard clinging to one of the walls. Andy was mumbling to himself. "The horror," he said. "Oh, the horror." I decided not to disturb him after all, figuring that he'd get finished a lot sooner without any interruptions from me.

The evening ended about an hour later. Andy had finished his fit of compulsive fanning and had taken his turn in the shower. Carrie had gone to sleep – she had to get up with the birds the next morning to go get their rental car – followed soon by Rob, who actually had to go to work the next day. Lynn, Neil and Avedon sat around the dining table talking and smoking. I had stepped, half-dressed, out into Rob's backyard to enjoy the slight breeze that I hoped would cool me down enough to go to sleep myself. After a few minutes, Andy joined me.

We talked about the day's events and the fun we'd had at Precursor. We talked about the prospects for the upcoming worldcon and remarked about how weird it was to find ourselves standing around barefoot in Rob and Avedon's driveway, instead of sitting at home in front of the TV wondering how to pay next month's rent.

"It sounds corny," I told Andy, "but we owe it all to Fandom."

"I hate living in a cliché," he chuckled.

"But it's true," I replied. "I literally would not be here if it weren't for Fandom. I already feel the pressure to live up to my responsibilities. It's scary."

"You know what's really scary?" asked my friend.

"Darrell Schweitzer in the nude?" I replied, half-kidding.

"Naw," Andy answered. "What's really scary is the thought of Carrie driving on the left side of he road. That's what's *really* scary."

I could see his point, but assured him that everything would be fine. "Just tell her to hug the curb and I'm sure you'll get to Glasgow in one piece," I told him. "Ghu will protect you, at least until you pub your ish."

"You're right, of course," he answered, heading back into the house. The sweat had finally evaporated from his forehead and he was off to sleep.

I followed a short time later. The last thing I remember as I drifted off to sleep that night was a vision of Cherie's lovely tattooed body mutating into the naked form of Darrell Schweitzer, and the sound of Andy

Hooper’s voice screaming, “Hug the curb! Hug the curb!”

Apparatchik #66, 29 August 1996

1998: Ulrika O’Brien

Ulrika O’Brien attended the 1998 British conventions Corflu UK in Leeds, West Yorkshire, and Intuition (the Eastercon) in Manchester. The rival candidates were Victor Gonzalez, Vicki Rosenzweig and Tom Sadler.

Platform

Everywhere I’ve gone in fandom, people drew me there. Each time, I re-learnt that when print friends meet, friendship deepens and we give each other better charity of understanding when we meet again in print. In my oddball walkabout of print and online fandom I’ve met a host of folks, challenging and intriguing, hailing from the UK and Europe. I’d like to meet them, the better to be friends. I’d like to swap scurrilous yarns over a pint, find out about this “real ale” business, prove I don’t bite, test my invulnerability to the opacity of British dialects. Oh, and write a scandalous trip report.

Nominators: Avedon Carol & Rob Hansen, Andy Hooper, Dave Langford, Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Geri Sullivan.

Exit, Pursued by a Gael
A Taff Defense of Sorts

Ulrika O'Brien

Probably the most common theme running through British reception of Widening Gyre *at Corflu UK was a desire to see more of me and my personality in the zine. In the time since I've come back from my TAFF trip, probably the most common question about my publication schedule has been, "So, when are we going to see your TAFF trip report?" In hopes of addressing both plaints with a single stroke, here is the first instalment of that report. Not really a first chronological chapter, just the bit that's coalesced into a semi-coherent whole in the interim; more of a sidebar to the trip report. The final report will probably have several side-bars. I'm sadly non-linear, that way.*

Lest American readers be needlessly alarmed, I should note that Ian Sorensen Bashing is a sort of national sport of British fandom, and so what you see before you is in fact not the result of any sustained malice, but merely my first, wobbly attempt to demonstrate fluency in the cultural practices I studied Over Yonder, by donning the ritual knee pads, snorkel, and mallet and addressing the wicket squarely.

Exit, Pursued by a Gael
A Taff Defense of Sorts

Evidently Ian Sorensen wants to get my goat. Everyone needs a hobby, I guess. This is not my goat. It isn't even my Croydonese drink order. But perhaps it will do as an answer to Ian, so he can move on to more exotic game. Mae Strelkov's sadly mutilated pet tapir, perhaps, or some of the more up-to-the-minute crotch-kicking Croydon coypus, or potoroos, or whatever funny animal they've taken to ordering drinks in now.

Ian only materializes to hector me once he's already drunk. Fade in: March, 1998. Corflu UK, Saturday night, the bar of the Leeds Griffin hotel well after midnight. Despite the hour, it was still the first day of my TAFF trip, since I hadn't been to bed yet. Steven Cain warned me not to judge UK beer by what the Griffin served – the real ale had run out before Hal

and I even got to Leeds. Still, even weak, flat lager isn't so bad, after six or seven. Or twelve. I lost count. The TAFF halo-effect had been channeling rounds my way at an alarming rate all evening. So okay, perhaps I was drunk, too.

Out of the suffused golden haze, Ian appears before me, tall, graying, devastatingly Scottish, with a face like a ruined angel and weaving slightly, looking faintly daft as the liquor makes him more noticeably wall-eyed than usual. Don't get me wrong. I'm not deprecating anyone here. I might well have been weaving by then, too, and wall-eyed, had I not had the foresight to cling decorously to some handy bit of furniture. A bar chair, I think it was. Possibly the wainscoting, but I think that was probably yet later in the evening.

Ian's conversation lurched immediately into familiar territory. For what seemed like the hundredth time that day, Ian grandly, if unsteadily, re-welcomed me to the UK and assured me that he was always *purely* in favor of my winning TAFF. (Um. Yes. This from the guy whose first words on meeting me were, "You're the reason I stopped reading RASFF." And while we're at it, if he was always in favor of my winning, why do I need all this reassuring now?) He explained he had been volubly extolling my virtues to anyone who asked him at the preceding Novacon. (Ah.) And besides, we were pals together, united in our mutual crusade to take Don West down a peg or two. (Oh, yes?) Protesting too much? Check. Playing the you-and-me-against-a-benighted-world card? Check. Pumping me full of greasy flattery? Check.

I nodded carefully, blinked owlishly, and pondered whether it would be acceptable to show skepticism at this stage. Cross-cultural exchanges are tricky. My social-signal meters were all still calibrated in Californian, and I was all too aware of my inexperience in the nuances of the UK comedic procedure known as the "piss take." A proper, British exchange of multi-layered, mutual irony might require me to act as if these bizarre claims were plausibly sincere, rather than a series of balletic misdirections setting up whatever finely honed zing could be slipped in, once my guard was down. Ever conservative, I quirked a quizzical eyebrow and adopted a noncommittal mien. That, or the beer was interfering with voluntary control of my facial muscles.

Yes, Ian was awfully glad I had won TAFF – despite his own feelings about TAFF itself I should understand – but Ian would never himself think of standing for TAFF. (How did we get to be talking about *him*?) At this point, I sensed rather than heard the snicker-snee of the Vorpal blade imminent. Even though this year Ian would be able to attend the US

Worldcon, since *for once* it didn't conflict with the start of his fall term, even now he wouldn't stand for TAFF. He wouldn't stand – ah, yes, here it came; I felt the point go in, just between the third and fourth ribs – because, really, TAFF was an outmoded hack of a fan fund that should be put out to pasture, or, better yet, sent down for glue. The institution served no useful purpose at all any more. (Other than bringing over such tatty personages as yours truly, one presumes.) TAFF was a dinosaur, properly supplanted by fanzines, Usenet, individual fans traveling on their own stick, and (with an airy gesture) general exchanges of fans coming to conventions such as This Very Corflu. (Never was he so gauche as to mention his own rather central role as Chair of This Very Corflu. Of course. The task of inferring what greatness we were in the midst of, and by whose humble hand it came to be, was left as an exercise to the listener.) TAFF, he explained kindly, offers nothing to fandom that couldn't be gotten by other means. (The pat on the head was implicit, rather than actual. I think.) I blinked, more desperately this time, the air having woofed out of my lungs just then.

Then, for all the world, Ian seemed to say, "So, how about a shag then?" [1]

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1 What he actually said, as I learned later, was "No chance of a shag, then?" Which is Very Different. Apparently Brits will have gotten The Reference. I didn't.

Blink. I must be very drunk indeed. Hallucinating? Perhaps I just missed the obvious-to-Brits social cue that the conversation was about to take a left turn into the surreal? Blink some more, it may help.

Not really, no.

See, when you've just been through the industrial blender of sleep deprivation, jet lagged time change, omigod-everyone-will-hate-me trip stress, a thirteen-hour advanced Yoga lesson, Heathrow, scalding lemon-scented towels, and a marathon dash through Kings Cross while being battered to death with your own luggage, all surmounted by a dollop of exploding train windows and soaked in some uncounted number of pints, it's easy to begin doubting facts and abilities that, a mere 24-hours ago, seemed solid. I thought I was tolerably good at following ordinary conversation. I could have sworn that, tenuous as it was, my grasp of British idiom included understanding of the verb, *to shag*. Now a voice in the back of my mind insisted: *everything you know is wrong*. I girded up the knots of my brow and tried to sort out what Ian was getting at.

On the face of it, it seemed as if he thought that insulting me was a

viable preamble for soliciting sex. My ignorance is vast, so possibly this is a time-tested Norse-Gaelic pick-up technique: *Hey, I have nothing but contempt for your reasons for being here, or your fan fund, but wanna fuck anyway?* Perhaps I was being ethnocentric in thinking that insult and sexual advances were somehow incompatible. Or maybe I was just feeling hypersensitive: trashing TAFF was no insult, not in a nation where "fat cow" is an epithet of jovial banter. Then again, maybe Ian was as drunk as he looked. As my time sense stretched out to the horizons, I wondered, idly, who it was that okayed the diplomatic inclusion of Tommy Ferguson's Ulrika-bashing convention review in the final *Corflu UK* progress report sent out just before I came over. If this TAFF assault were such another sample of the Sorensen Charm, possibly Ian's technique might benefit from skipping the flattery and moving straight on to pronouncing words with the letter "U" in them, at least for purposes of picking up humourless American girls.

But these are thoughts the mind interpolates afterwards.

I snapped back into the moment, and noticed I'd already spoken. Judging by the echoes in my head, I'd smiled gaily and deprecatingly chirped, "Not just now, thanks," before fully registering what the question was. Only on hearing my own voice did I consider what had just happened: *Christ, I didn't just callously backhand a sincere offer of squalid, demeaning sexual depravity, did I? What was I thinking?* Not that my ultimate answer would have been so very different. But a girl likes to be gentle about this sort of stuff. In abject gratitude for being saved the asking, we try to play our cutting-off-at-the-knees role as kindly as we can. So he had to have been joking, right? Right? Absolutely nobody on the face of the planet has romantic timing that stunningly bad, do they? I didn't – *Oh, sweet Jesus God* – just hurt *his feelings* did I?

No very definitive answer was forthcoming from a quick inventory of Ian's expression, but the perplexity of this unexpected segue utterly killed any thought I might have had of addressing the *Value of TAFF* issue. *Pffft.* TAFF forgotten in an instant. Perhaps that was the real point, I belatedly realize. Devilish cunning, these Brits.

Ian solemnly sucked on his teeth a bit, and then wandered off somewhere else. Or possibly, we chatted a while longer, but as I'd gone all introspective and confused by then, I didn't notice particularly either way. I mean if he *meant* it, then the offer was really kind of *sweet*, in a completely inept sort of way. I ruminated over this, and considered being retroactively charmed, but postponed any decision in favor of a slow slide into beery catatonia.

Evening moved forward in a series of abrupt, muddled jump cuts. I spent some time clinging to the wainscoting trying to sort out whether Tobes Valois was speaking English at me, and I'd simply grown too drunk to parse it, or whether that really was the post-French Valoiese mother tongue from far-off Jersey, and I wasn't *supposed* to understand a word. I think I tried to suggest to Victor Gonzalez that Bill Bridget's notional and behavioral peculiarities might not, strictly speaking, be Gary Farber's fault, to no particular effect beyond exciting further dyspeptic eruptions from Victor, and I completely missed the part where women were exposing their breasts to all and sundry and Steve Green in the bar – unless that was me, in which case I must have been there. Eventually it all looped off the take-up reel into untidy oblivion. Fade out.

Fast forward to reel six, one month later: Saturday night of Intuition, the 49th Eastercon, where the central stair lobby of the Manchester Britannia hotel spiraled dizzyingly upward, an absurd confection of peacock blue and gilt Victorian gimcrackery, while the lights of British fandom twinkled below, decorously draping themselves on the scattered chaise-longues, bars, and banisters. This was the last night of my TAFF visit. Ian Sorensen hove into view again, for the first time since Leeds. This time grinning maniacally and bobbling slightly as he came. I must be frightfully naive, or else I was very slightly drunk again (a recurring TAFF trip theme, you may begin to infer) because I didn't suspect myself in for another round of Gaelic TAFF-baiting until I was right up to my tits in it. Ian had some fellow Scotsman in tow, another Glaswegian, I think, both of them salaciously flashing their accents. Ian made a point of collaring me and introducing the angular Celt as Mike Molloy, and then he introduced me – very carefully enunciating the capitals – as Ulrika O'Brien, The *TAFF* Winner, while doing those sexy, rolling Scottish things with the terminal R.

I drifted off into a momentary reverie, contemplating the hope of surgical accent-ectomy in my lifetime. *Oh, to have those glorious, liquid Ls and rippling Rs, those pert, juicy diphthongs, installed in someone with even the vestigial nubs of a human conscience.* Back in the moment, Mike and I shook hands, and he congratulated me, hoping I'd had a good trip, and wishing me luck with the rest of it. I was just explaining that my trip was only hours away from being over, when Ian's splutters of outrage interrupted me.

"What do you mean, 'Best of luck with your trip'?!?" Ian yelped indignantly.

He turned to me. "Michael here has only had it in for TAFF ever

since Avedon Carol was the winner at the Glasgow Eastercon in ’83, where she made some rather tart sort of humorous remarks about the food at the banquet. He didn’t take it well. It seemed a wee bit ungrateful to him, criticizing the free food others provided, as he’s *usually* **happy** to tell *anyone*.”

Scowling pointedly at Mike, Ian plunged on: “Come *on*. You’ve been on against TAFF ever since. What *about* it, now?”

I reckon there can’t be anything more frustrating than a well-planned ambush going unexpectedly pear-shaped at the crucial moment.

Mike smiled, glanced at me, and looked faintly embarrassed. “I’ve only been saying that it doesn’t seem right to expect ordinary convention-going fans to be forced to spend their money in support of someone they’ve never heard of, nor care a toss about, either.”

I nodded sympathetically. “In fact, the convention isn’t paying my hotel here, you know. They’ve given me a membership, and I’m working a Green Room shift at that. For the rest, it’s all voluntary TAFF money. Uninterested fans aren’t paying anything for my trip, as far as I know.” This revelation appeared to take the last of the already diffident wind out of Mike’s sails. I never suspected Intuition’s inability to afford my room would transmogrify into a firm command of the moral high ground, but there it was. Mike seemed, if not wholly satisfied, then certainly reticent.

Ian made a couple more passes with the bait, jabbing and feinting, trying to goad Mike into some more satisfying jeremiad against the fund, in general or perhaps me in particular, but Mike didn’t seem eager to rise to it a second time. Before it all got too, too mortifying and awkward, I muttered something vaguely polite about addressing my shipping boxes, packing my luggage, and saying my last good-byes, and filtered furtively away into the crowd. (Eventually I will sort out why other people’s embarrassment is so mortifying to oneself.) Saturday night floated off on a few final pints of the mild and little unsought grace notes of fannish charity and bonhomie, breaking down at the last into fitful, disjointed packing for my return trip. Easter Sunday found me up at gray daybreak bundled into a vast black cab bound for Manchester International, and thence, home.

After the fact, it’s tempting to chalk these strange Sorensenian pantomimes up to the quaint-if-awkward welcoming customs of island natives, or to my own fuddle-headed American clumsiness with the trickier forms of British humour, and so dismiss them lightly. But however gay and well-intentioned in context, the charge that TAFF has become redundant is sufficiently serious that it merits a serious answer. Certainly,

after Bucconeer, where Ian appeared yet again to aim a bristling Julian Hedgehog, er, Headlong, at me for Round Three of Why TAFF Should Fold Up Its Pathetic, Threadbare Tents And Go Home, and other assorted ox goring, I have a keen sense that Ian wants a serious response. So, all right. I'll have a go at being serious. Sorry, folks, it gets a bit worthy from here on. I'll try to be brief.

When fans disagree, as fans often do, about whether past accomplishment, sheer fan-authorial greatness, potential for future transatlantic fanac, fiscal probity, sense of humour, or perhaps the ability to be on the receiving end of gallons of free beer and still remain upright and capable of taking notes is most important in a Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund delegate [2], they indirectly point out the most basic nature of the fund: TAFF is complex. It is large, and contains multitudes. It accomplishes a variety of ends, and people love – and hate – it for myriad reasons. TAFF is a synergy. Anyone who imagines that the fund can be replaced by single activities that resemble constituent parts of TAFF has missed other parts, and more crucially, the fact that the whole is greater than the sum of them. TAFF is not just meeting people from another continent; it is not just a means to travel. It accomplishes these things, and then completely transcends them.

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2 The real answer of course, is that an ideal TAFF delegate is all of those things, and more. The ideal TAFF winner, as we all know, is Walt Willis. However, once you've run out of people who are Walt Willis, you may have to make some tough decisions about which of Willis's many virtues are central to being a TAFF delegate. On this, reasonable people may legitimately disagree.

A TAFF trip certainly isn't, *pace* critics, just a subsidized vacation. For one thing, vacations are supposed to be relaxing. With a TAFF trip, relaxing is what you do once you get home and slump onto your own couch and your nerve endings finally stop humming Bach fugues to themselves. Better yet, if you want peace of mind, relaxing is what you do after you finish your trip report, hand over the administration to the next chump, having raised a few thousand Simoleons for the fund in the interim. (By this reckoning, there are a number of fairly tense former administrators still out there...)

So the fact that *many* fans (certainly not all, nor perhaps even most) can afford to take transatlantic vacations on their own funds is no substitute for TAFF. Going down to the travel agent's and looking at posters of exotic Birmingham and glossy brochures depicting the fleshpots of Croydon elicits a pleasant little thrill to be sure. So does the frisson of

terror you get when you plunk down your own Visa to pay for it all, greasy, heart-clogging breakfasts included. Still, however many sombrero-clad tissue-paper coypus dangle from the travel bureau's acoustic tile, however Arcadian the vision of far-off Reading, nowhere in the process of taking a private trip will the traveller find herself stopped dead in her tracks by profound gratitude, by a sudden sense of responsibility, and honour, and debt to pay forward to fandom. Winning TAFF is a gift. It changes you, makes you briefly magical. It takes even an ordinary fangirl, say yours truly, and makes her queen for a day, or a month. Maureen Speller calls the transformative power of it her TAFF Coat, which she can don, superhero-wise, to perform feats that she would never dare do as her ordinary self.

Winning TAFF is far more than the mere wonder of travel to another country – it is an offering of the very concrete esteem and interest of your fellow fans. It's a sudden, heady, drunken moment of stardom. It is, in a word, an *honour*. Until we're sure we've run out of fans on both sides of the Atlantic that we now or ever will want to honour with our collective interest and friendship, I don't see how we could consider giving up the institutional means for bestowing that honour.

A TAFF trip also isn't just a chance for meeting people in the flesh. The fan fund builds networks in fandom. Every time we send a delegate across the Atlantic, friendships start, others grow. Fans make memories together. That stuff can happen when fans travel as individuals too, surely. But TAFF inspires. It moves fans to reach out in good will, and with a daffy kind of hope of good things to come. People go out of their way to be kind, and funny, and available for each other, because it's TAFF, because of the magic of the fund itself. Chances of building a sense of mutual allegiance and connection can't help being improved by that. And in an ever expanding fandom, where we complain at every convention we go to about how awful it is that fandom is growing apart, getting cliquish, becoming balkanized, surely we can't afford to discard *any* means to building new bridges. Even if TAFF were merely *as good* as individual travel at building networks, it would be good. The tighter we can web fandom together with strong bonds between individual fans, the better.

But I think TAFF is actually better for nurturing networks than individual travel is. Individual travel is a private act. It is an act of self-indulgence, sufficient if it only serves one's own wishes and vanity, or lack thereof. A TAFF trip is a public act, conducted as a public trust. The age and history of the fund, and its deep resonance as Fannish Institution, inspires host-country fans far beyond what they might otherwise take on. It

gives them a chance to participate in the TAFF mystique. I'm not making this up. People who have previously otherwise never heard of you actually show up to buy you rounds and lunches and things, cook you special meals of typical cuisine, and drive hundreds of miles out of their way, just for the privilege of treating the TAFF winner, or in the hope of being immortalized in the trip report afterwards. I feel dead certain that Ulrika O'Brien, random fan from America, could not inspire such extraordinary flights of kindness and whimsy.

Conversely, because it was TAFF I was traveling for, I resolved to get over myself, push my boundaries, take everything in in gulps rather than nibbles. As best I could, I tossed humility, restraint, not to mention personal taste, out the window. Solo presentation at Eastercon? Chatting with entire rooms or pubs full of total strangers? The threat of hot and cold running Pickersgills? Boiled, oat-stuffed sheep gut, blood pudding, Tizer, hot Vimto, mushy peas, salmon sandwiches off the GNER food service trolley, ginger fudge, Marks & Spencers pre-packed Chicken tikka masala sandwiches, Rob Hansen's bean-laced cooking? I braved them all for the TAFF and Country.

And gearing up for the trip, I had the audacity to *ask* people to put me up, expect that they might want to have me visit, and then go forth and try to get to every fan center and pub meet expressing even the tiniest interest. These fans had, after all, indicated their curiosity in seeing me via the ballot box. Amazingly, the invitations poured in from all corners of the UK, giving me the necessary piss and vinegar to put myself forward even more. In the guise of my own shy, and mouse-like self, I wouldn't have had the effrontery to do it. Who the hell wants to meet *me* traveling just as myself? People might, but I wouldn't have the arrogance to assume it, let alone count on it. I often don't even warn people that I'll be in town if I'm just traveling privately. It's only me, after all. But being TAFF Delegate put me outside that. It's perfectly reasonable people would want to meet the TAFF representative, even if it turns out that it's only me.

The point is, if TAFF had the power to bring me out of my shell and turn me into a bold, outgoing, haggis-eating marvel of a woman, I'm probably not the only one so affected. Traveling for TAFF meant I was representing something bigger than myself (hard as that may be to credit). As a private person I wouldn't feel any obligation to go out of my way or push my own limits. As a public one, I felt fans had a right to expect it.

Nor is TAFF just a commodity means of soaking up fannish charity. Julian Headlong points out that there are concentrations of fans – in South Africa for instance – that are in far more urgent need of fan funds for

travel exchanges than Europe and North America mutually are. He implies that this need would somehow magically be met if we were to shut down TAFF. I'm sure he's right that greater needs – or at least greater financial gaps – exist. But the fact of greater need elsewhere hardly means there's *no* need for TAFF. And even it did, how could we ensure that the energy and money and loyalty that now support TAFF would shift to a South African fund once TAFF was mothballed? It's too much to suppose that established loyalties, friendships, and interests, and the energy of continuation can be automatically hand-waved into new interests, loyalties, and the energy of creation. If fan funds were as interchangeable as manufactured Ford parts, then TAFF would be just as cheerful, feud-free, and pan-fannish as DUFF, and UK voters as likely to vote in a DUFF race as in a GUFF race, and North Americans in GUFF. But sadly, it ain't so. People's loyalties are specific. They care about particular funds, and particular causes. The real risk, I think, would be in deciding to discontinue TAFF, only to find ourselves with no TAFF, and no South African fan fund either, but only lost momentum and fandom the poorer for it.

If we want to build South African connections, by all means let's do that. But sitting fan fund administrators are a resource. We share a remarkable pool of experience and information with other administrators and new winners. Why handicap a new fund by dismantling one of the very resources that can be used to help make it successful? If we want to start a South African Fan Fund, let's start one. This has fuck-all to do with TAFF.

Some of the claims against the fund are just silly, of course. The proposition that everyone can now afford private transatlantic travel is just false. Especially on the British side, there are current candidates and recent winners who could not possibly have afforded the trip on their own. Conversely, there have been winners, especially Americans, able to *afford* the travel for almost as long as the fund has existed – Lee Hoffman travelled on her own money as early as 1956. TAFF was never strictly a need-based fellowship, though that can be one of its practical functions. Nevertheless, indigence was never an eligibility criterion for TAFF.

Likewise, Ian's suggestion that online and fanzine fanac replace TAFF is piffle. If print friendship were a substitute for in-person friendship, we would never have gotten fan funds in the first place. Hell, we never would have gotten conventions, or fandom as we know it. We'd all still be swapping zines and replying to each other's locs in the lettercols and never bother with all the fuss of running clubs, or pub gatherings, or

putting on and traveling to conventions. But written conversations and spoken conversations are different animals – they support each other, and contribute to each other, and often continue each other, but can't fully replace each other. Though I admit I *could* have spilled beer on scrawly, water-soluble notes in my own kitchen, and spared a lot of trouble and expense, they wouldn't have been notes on the tragedy that is the shortage of American lesbians in Martin Smith's love life if I had. Nor would I have the accompanying photos of the undersides of the chins of the dreaded Oxford Stripe League. These little details matter. However much we push writing as the key ingredient to fanzines – with justification – you just don't get at least some people to participate in the written portion of our fannish conversation until you get them interested in the people conversing. Meeting people is a crucial part of even our written conversation.

I've also seen the suggestion that TAFF can be replaced with one-off funds for individual stars. Perhaps so, but the continuity of funding and loyalty could easily disappear as a result. Meanwhile, as the Auld Lang Fund and Farber Fund so show, nothing about the existence of TAFF prevents fans from putting together one-shot funds for individual travellers. A one-shot fund has the kind of versatility of timing and recipient that TAFF doesn't – thus they complement each other. If there is a great foment to bring particular fans cross country to Corflu, for instance, this seems like a sterling case for a one-shot or for creating a separate Corflu travel fund, rather than monkeying with the established one.

As I've been hinting, many of these claims against the value of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund reduce to a single one: that TAFF is unimportant because private acts can replace public ones. But that is simply dead wrong. Private acts are qualitatively different from public ones. We are animals of the agora; we need public acts to define ourselves by what we share in common. By our public acts are we known, to others and ourselves. The very core of TAFF's importance lies in the fact that it is a *public* institution, a particularly venerable one, redolent with tradition and memory and spilled beer. It fairly vibrates with fannish identity. Who we are is the people who argue about, love, hate, support, criticize, revile, and go through repeated fits of abjuring, TAFF. Who would we *be* without TAFF to kick around anymore? How can we be certain that all our golden ages, all our shining stars, are behind us, such that all we are fit to do is remember the days when we had TAFF to care about?

If we dismantle TAFF, we would be sending another public message. We would be redefining ourselves, for the worse. If we say we don't need

TAFF, can't be bothered with finding and publicly honouring fans across the Atlantic, what are we expressing but our collective, mutual indifference? What would our message be, but, "You have nothing to show us that we have not already seen. Let each fan find his own friends, but as for us, we have enough already, and we certainly don't need you?" Who could fail to be hurt by that? Privately, as opposed to public postures of invulnerability, who wouldn't smart from an entire continent giving them the cold shoulder? (Here we should insert a musical chorus of Ian Sorensen declaiming, "I. Just. Don't. Care." But this only proves my point. If ever there was a man obviously desperate for the praise and attention he pretends to be Too Cool to seek or acknowledge, it's Ian.) I can't help thinking such a declaration would drive a cold iron wedge in transatlantic relations. What a sad pity that would be. What a way to end a fund intended to extend and cement international friendship. You can't tell me that ain't ironic, even if I am just an American.

Ian, or, perhaps it was Julian, has also gotten fond of asking rhetorically, "Who does TAFF help, really?" The answer we're supposed to come up with, I gather, is, "Nobody but the TAFF winner." And I suppose if you only count help in terms of money received, that may be so. But if you count it in friendships, jokes and good times shared, and bonds across fandom, then the real answer is, literally anybody who chooses to participate in someone else's TAFF visit. Of course TAFF doesn't give absolutely everybody a sudden shot of the adoring warm fuzzies for whole nations. But if you spend a bit of their trip with a TAFF visitor, share a pint, give 'em a ride, go to the zoo, chat at a party, or argue over what they said in their last issue, then you get a bigger sense of that person, perhaps discover they're actually all right after all, and that's one more person you know a little to hang out with at future conventions. In some cases, lots of cases, a few hours together turn into the start of a friendship. And gets you somebody to impose on if you travel across the pond yourself. But you do have to drop your ironic distance to get there. You have to get involved. Participating in public acts only works for those who self-select into the polity; it only helps those who choose to take part.

Perhaps the very best answer to Ian and Julian and the current crop of TAFF bashers is TAFF itself: the ongoing, vital existence of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, despite and perhaps even because of recent setbacks. The fund continues and prospers, right now. Because it does, it baffles that anybody could seriously propose it has outlived its usefulness. I'm not sure an all-volunteer effort such as a fan fund is capable of doing that. It is, after all, utterly dependent on the freely given time and money of dozens

or hundreds of people to keep going. The fact that fans continue shelling out their hard-earned buckazoids and quidazoids in order to vote, to buy trip reports, to bid for fanzines and random-ass kipple in fund auctions, and just outright donate to the fund, suggests that they value TAFF in a very concrete way. The fact that fans open up their homes, extend their hospitality, and go out of their way to invent and host events for delegates suggests they value the fund in a very personal way. It may sound circular, but isn't really: so long as we *have* TAFF we can know that we want and need it. When we truly no longer want or need TAFF, then it will simply cease to be. Nobody will have to argue for taking it apart; nobody will have to do anything to anybody's goat, coypu, hedgehog, tapir, or ox. The fund will simply waddle off in the footsteps of the dodo, doing wobbly, drooping pirouettes as it goes. I for one will be saddened if that day ever comes, but it hasn't come yet.

And in the meantime, I'll have double vodka goat, twist of lemon, shaken, not stirred. Ian can have whatever goat suits him. Cheers.

Widening Gyre #5, March 2000

1998: Maureen Kincaid Speller

Maureen Kincaid Speller attended BucConeer, the 1998 US Worldcon in Baltimore, Maryland. The rival candidates were Chris Bell and Bridget Hardcastle. Maureen Kincaid Speller died in 2022.

Platform

I've spent eighteen years doing what fans do. I've been on convention committees, including several Mexicons and Intuition, the 1998 Eastercon, and I run the British Science Fiction Association. I frequent rec.arts.sf.fandom, write for apas and fanzines, and duplicate *Banana Wings* (my collection of duplicators is exceeded only by my legendary collection of earrings). My own fanzine, *Snufkin's Bum*, is appearing with increasing frequency.

My perception of fandom is primarily one of getting together with friends. With all the American friends I've made, I'd like to sample fandom US-style. I'll even show you my Gestetner earrings....

Nominators: Claire Brialey, Christina Lake, Dave Langford, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Geri Sullivan.

Snufkin Goes West... 1

Maureen Kincaid Speller

"Three months," said Mark, "is a long time to be away. Are you going to do your TAFF report as you go?"

"No," I said firmly. "Much as I love Martin, I think he was insane. I don't want to spend every waking hour tapping away at a trip report. I want to write that when I get back."

"You could," said Mark, "send back bulletins along the way. E-mail them to Claire, I'll format them and we can copy them and hand them out at the Jubilee and send a few out to people. That way, people know what's going on and it won't seem as though you've disappeared off the face of the earth for three months."

The man is a genius. He even came up with the title and the format... so you know who to blame.

"Of course," he said then, "we'll need to get the first one done for the August Jubilee..." Given the time constraints, just imagine that as you hold this in your hot sweaty hand in the Jubilee circa 7 p.m., I hope I'll be somewhere in the fully air-conditioned Baltimore Convention Centre, sorry Center, at about 2 p.m., hopefully not going "ohmigod" as the full enormity of an American Worldcon hits me. Oh, and given the baroque licensing laws in Baltimore, would you have a drink for me? In fact, would you make it several? I probably need them.

Everything You Wanted to Know About Winning TAFF And Were Afraid To Ask

HANDY TIP #1: Do not let your cat campaign on your behalf by diving into Ulrika O'Brien's dinner.

Sunday April 25th dawns rather too bright, rather too early, and I settle down to wait for the results of the TAFF ballot. I could be killing time at Unconvention in London, but have eschewed the delights of a day with R. Lionel Fanthorpe, David V. Barrett *et al*, partly because of a lack of spare initials, partly because it's the first weekend Paul and I have had to ourselves in months, and mostly because I already know I am going to be a

bag of nerves all day and it doesn't seem kind to inflict myself on the world. Tolerance is at a low ebb. As the day goes on, it recedes so far I conclude someone's pulled the plug out in the Atlantic. At this rate, I'd be able to walk to Baltimore. I spend hours poring over small maps with illegible lines denoting time zones. What time's midnight in Arlington?

The phone melts as I download e-mail at increasingly regular intervals, waiting for news. In between, people phone to wish me luck and to ask if I've heard anything yet. Paul fields the phonecalls to protect people from me. Nothing much is happening on rec.arts.sf.fandom. There may be quicker, more effective ways of going mad, but I can't think of one off-hand.

Around 9 p.m. I go to bed, but just lie there, muttering and being comforted by Snufkin. At 10 p.m., Paul phones Martin, who says he hasn't heard from Dan yet, and he's not answering the phone. Paul mutters a lot, too. I've finally fallen asleep when the phone rings an hour later. Paul miraculously shoots across the room to answer it while I'm still waking up, listens intently, thanks the speaker. He leans over me and says, "Congratulations, you've won." "Oh," I say helpfully. "Can I have a cup of tea?" While he's doing this, I ring Croydon to let Claire know the result. I retrieve my shattered eardrum from several hundred yards down the road the next morning.

Finding the Trail

I need, I say to the guy on the other end of the phone, two flights to Washington, two flights from New York to Chicago, one flight from Chicago to Heathrow in August, and one flight from New York to Heathrow in October. Ah, he says, your husband is flying home later. No, I say, I am flying home later. There is a long pause. Feminism is obviously late arriving in Kensington High Street.

Later, when I ring to confirm the bookings, a different person informs me that Paul is booked on the midday flight from New York to Chicago; I am booked on the 1 p.m. flight from New York to Chicago. The first guy has obviously taken this separation very much to heart.

HANDY TIP #2: Do not try to buy traveller's cheques on the day the entire Barclays Bank computer network decides to take an all-day siesta.

Sparkly Frocks 'R' Us

Dave Langford discreetly emails me, one day, and hypothesizes that in an alternative universe, where he can quote the e-mail he's not quoting to me right now, I might like to be his representative, should he unaccountably happen to be nominated for and win the Hugo for Best Fanzine. I unaccountably accept.

At Eastercon, everyone is seized with sparkly frock fever. John Dallman accosts me in the bar, and asks if I'd like to be *Attitude*'s representative at the Hugo Ceremony, if I win TAFF; that way I can wear a sparkly frock and go to the Hugo Losers' Party. I say yes: not sure about the sparkly frock but the Hugo Losers' Party sounds fun. A couple of days later, Mike Abbott asks me precisely the same thing, in practically the same words. Cool... synchronized inviting.

I've never been to a Hugo ceremony so I haven't a clue what's expected. Sartorial opinion suggests that it's a dressing-up sort of occasion, which is even more worrying as I am not very good at girlie stuff, and I'm led to believe that Americans are really into dressing up for Hugos. Talking to Patrick Nielsen Hayden about various things, I perhaps unwisely ask him about this; he opines that it's fine to pick up a Hugo in jeans and sneakers. I wonder whether to buy some sequins to stick on my trainers. Popular opinion, however, favours a purple frock, with sparkles. As it turns out, Croydon yields something completely different that I realize is exactly what I wanted in the first place.

And for Dave Langford and for *Attitude*, I spend several toe-crushing weeks learning to wear high heels again, gritting my teeth and persevering with the blisters. After a day or two, I feel in sympathy with the Ugly Sister who cut off her toe so the glass slipper fitted. I think longingly of sneakers, sequinned or not.

> HANDY TIP #3: Do not drive your car for at least three days after winning TAFF, do not use automatic supermarket doors, do not go out without telling anyone where you are going, do not pass Go, do not mislay £200... Remember to get dressed, brush your teeth and eat.

At Eastercon, Tony Cullen gives me a ten dollar bill left over from his trip to the States, telling me to have a drink from him when I get there. Later, he gives me a guidebook he used when he was in the States. He really thinks I'm going to win.

I still have that ten dollar bill tucked away safely, ready to have a

drink in San Francisco.

I shall be back for Novacon this year, so start saving your hard-earned pennies for the United Fan Fund auction and the exciting things I'll be bringing back. If you're seized with a sudden whim to donate money to TAFF (and I feel that people should be seized with this sort of whim every now and then), feel free to send me a cheque, made out to "Maureen Speller" and specifying its destination clearly. Or press cash (sterling or dollars) into my hand as I pass by.

My Trip Report will be written up during the Christmas holiday. Fanzine editors may like to book their chunk now; Steve Green and *Banana Wings* are commended for their forward planning. The complete report will be available at next year's Eastercon.

Snufkin Goes West... #1, July 1998

Snufkin Goes West... 2

Maureen Kincaid Speller

Heathrow: The plane thunders down the runway, and I'm fascinated by the fact that the wings have developed a distinctly lattice-like effect as the flaps organize themselves for take-off. As the ground drops away I lean right forward in my seat to savour the moment. I glance round to reassure Paul that I'm not at all nervous, and find him ashen-faced, clinging to the arms of his seat. Come to think of it, so's everyone else. Why didn't anyone tell me you're not supposed to *enjoy* take-off? As we fly over Greenland, the clouds part and I stare down at an incredible landscape of mountains and ice. I eventually realize that the large white blobs in the sea are icebergs. Given that we're flying at 36,000 feet, they must be very large icebergs.

Washington, DC: Marilee Layman has no idea what I look like. I have only the haziest recollection of what she looks like from a hasty inspection of her Web site. Miraculously, we instantly recognize one another at Dulles Airport because, of course, we are fans and have that look about us. This also holds good the next morning when we meet Richard Lynch at Union Station (but possibly that's because people don't normally hang around at the Amtrak Information Point). Rich's notorious but highly recommended "full press court gonzo walking tour" takes in Ford's Theater where Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth – distant ancestor of Cherie Booth, which kind of suggests Tony Blair shouldn't get too baroque in rearranging the UK. In the basement is the world's most bizarre collection of memorabilia, everything from locks of hair (if all these really did come from Lincoln's head, his hair must have hung down in ringlets to his knees) to the tools used to seal down Lincoln's coffin, and more bits of funeral drapery than the world really needs. Paul, needless to say, is in ecstasy. Meanwhile, I am riveted by the extraordinary collection of portraits of Lincoln, some of which bear absolutely no resemblance to him at all.

Arlington: Dan Steffan wins Paul's heart by handing him two Civil War bullets to play with. He also presents us both with TAFF T-shirts, and we spend a raucous and congenial evening with the Steffans and Ted White in an Italian restaurant.

Baltimore: The hotel room – booked in the names of Maureen and Paul Speller; how I laughed – is on the seventh floor, with full-length windows. Only after I fling open the curtains on Thursday morning and realize that I am staring into an adjacent office block does it occur to me that US hotels aren't too up on the idea of net curtains. I take to dressing before I open the curtains. Bucconeer rapidly becomes known as SoreFootCon because everything is Very Far Away From Anywhere Else, even within the convention centre. Arcane licensing laws also mean there is no alcohol available on the premises to assuage the mighty thirst built up by constant trekking from one end of the building to another. I learn later that the bulk of the British contingent decamp to a pub across the road. Pat McMurray informs me that her luggage is in Reykjavik. At least, that's where the airline told her it was, and that's where they're looking for it, so she hopes that's where it is. Mike Ford's luggage spends a good deal of time touring rural Maryland, looking for Nic Farey's house. We appear to be the only British fans whose luggage has not circumnavigated the globe three times unaccompanied. We are loudly smug.

TAFF meets DUFF: Terry Frost (DUFF delegate) and I spend a lot of time together, not least because we're programmed together at every available opportunity. This is a fact which will later lead to some deeply entertaining confusion in New York among those who can't tell the difference between an Australian accent and a Mancunian one. We're also co-presenting the Hugos for Best Fan Artist and Best Fan Writer. I cunningly contrive to have *Snufkin's Bum* mentioned by Charles Sheffield when he introduces us, which pleases me so much that I spend the rest of the evening telling people about it. Joe Mayhew, winner of Best Fan Artist, says a good number of very nice things about Ian Gunn. When I announce the Best Fan Writer Hugo, the name staring out at me is that of Dave Langford. I've come several thousand miles to present a Hugo to Martin Hoare. Later, at the Hugo Losers' Party, someone is overheard opining that Martin Hoare is really Dave Langford in disguise. Fashion note: At the Hugo ceremony, Maureen Speller was wearing a very stylish (and much praised) Chinese-style suit in dark green silk. She also wore high heeled shoes, as promised; and, as feared, they hurt. She would like to assure everyone that *this* is why Terry Frost was carrying her through the streets of Baltimore, honest.

Outside is America: We pile ourselves and a good deal of luggage into the Nielsen Hayden hired car and set out to storm Gettysburg. Only now do I begin to fully appreciate the appalling enormity of Strip Mall America, where nothing is more than a storey high and everything goes on

forever. Cultural shock is vocal and prolonged and vastly entertains Patrick and Teresa. “If you think this is bad,” says Patrick, “wait ’til you get to the West Coast. They’ve more space there.”

Gettysburg: Visitor’s Centre, something over a hundred dollars; Paul, a number of heavy books about the Civil War, some maps and a set of Civil War screen-savers, not to mention a promise of another book from Teresa to complete a set. Maureen sighs resignedly.

New York: We like New York. In fact we *love* New York and are rather reluctant to leave. Paul commits the ultimate gastronomic solecism in the 2nd Avenue Deli and orders his pastrami on *white* bread, and Gary Farber later assures me I am the first Brit he’s ever encountered who actually likes lox. We take the book shops by storm, do culture, go to the top of the Empire State Building with Mike Ford, wander boggle-eyed around the local neighbourhood stores (I have to be forcibly restrained from mailing home the entire dried chilli section of one of Patrick and Teresa’s corner shops), drink beer, eat ice cream, walk across Brooklyn Bridge, visit Ellis Island’s museum and generally have a great time. I shall return. “Lucky sod,” said Paul.

Goshen, Indiana: So small, no one has ever heard of it except me, Paul, and Karen Babich. We spend two days with a non-fannish friend who tours us round the local shops (books, cross-stitch and quilting), and also takes us to Shipshewana, an Amish and Mennonite community which is something of a tourist trap. Nevertheless, in the thick of it, the Amish and the Mennonites pursue their traditional ways and drive their horses and buggies to town (bicycles are also permitted). Paul buys obscene amounts of sf and Civil War stuff from a bookseller who turns out to be a fantastically good cross-stitcher. In a local museum, Paul finds another relic of the Civil War – a piece of the towel used as a flag when Lee surrendered to Grant – and sits on the floor staring at it for a long time.

Paul is now safely home, as doubtless most of you will be noticing in due course. His last message said he’d been downloading my e-mail for two hours and still hadn’t finished.

Thanks go to Marilee J Layman, Richard Lynch, Ted White, Dan & Lynne Steffan, Terry Frost, Ulrika O’Brien, Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Debi, Karl & Jason Kreider, Nigel Rowe and Karen Babich for the fantastic hospitality and support provided so far, not to mention everyone at Bucconeer and in New York who put in so much time and effort to entertain us. Special mention must also go to Vicki Rosenzweig, Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenstein and Gary Farber in NY for maps, guidebooks and much good advice.

The US-UK TAFF race is now under way, the winner to attend Reconvene next Easter. The candidates are Vijay Bowen and Sarah Prince. Extra-special TAFFish gratitude to Dave Langford for heroically distributing ballots in the UK while I'm away. Please support TAFF by voting, donating money and suitable items for auction, and simply taking an interest. TAFF relies wholly on the support and goodwill of fandom and has done so for more than 40 years, a remarkable achievement.

Snufkin Goes West... #2, August 1998

Snufkin Goes West... 3

Maureen Kincaid Speller

A note arrives with my copy of *SGW* #2. Mark tells me he had to drop stuff, and "margins are getting smaller all the time." Hmm, and I thought there was so much more space out west (according to Patrick Nielsen Hayden).

Chicago: Our heroine bid a tearful farewell to Paul, who flew home to wreak havoc on REC.ARTS.SF.FANDOM and the TIMEBINDERS list by using her e-mail account without signing on as a member of the Here family. People were telling me about this all the way to Seattle; it's amazing how much impact one man and one e-mail account can have on the world.

Meanwhile, at the Field Museum in Chicago, I am buying postcards and a book. Me: do you take traveller's cheques? Young person at till: yes. So I write my first traveller's cheque (Paul had written them all previously, to use his up), hand over my passport as per Paul's explanation, and the young person looks at me blankly. "Er, do you have a driver's licence?" "Yes, but I don't think it's going to be much help; it's a UK driver's licence." He stares at it blankly for a few moments and then starts phoning people. I'm reminded of a story I once heard about Dan Steffan lambasting someone for not accepting a British passport as proof of identity, and rather wish he was here now. I practise fine speeches about this passport being good enough to get me into the country etc etc. The Young Person is listening intently to the receiver, with the kind of expression that suggests he doesn't overly understand what he's hearing. Finally he says, "No, she's not from the US," pauses and then puts down the phone. Obviously, no one had ever told him that overseas visitors use traveller's cheques too, and that they don't tend to have a US driving licence for ID.

Jae Leslie Adams has nobly volunteered to drive me to Madison. In Chicago we posit a new theory of Western civilization which requires domestication of animals because everyone had become too short-sighted to track them. Delighted with this, we provide a practical demonstration by failing to notice we've lost ourselves in a set of roadworks in a north Chicago suburb and are now heading for Milwaukee. We arrive in Madison only a couple of hours late.

Madison: My host Jeanne Gomoll is revealed as a closet cat-wrapper. Apparently, she wraps them up and they fall over. I devote much of my visit to persuading her that it really is time she came to the UK again, to meet Snufkin. Between times, Hope Kiefer initiates me into the mysteries of Beanie Baby collecting, Scott Custis introduces Madison fandom to beer survived the British way, and we visit House on the Rock, a terrible warning to fandom about accumulating too much Stuff. This is probably the weirdest place I've ever visited. Words really can't do it justice (and probably just as well for Mark's sake).

The mid-West's answer to Thelma and Louise hit the road again, this time to Minneapolis (reflecting that it is as well there are no canyons for us to drive over, nor any need to gun down Harvey Keitel). However, Jae adds to my collection of roadside attractions by taking me to Prairie Moon, an assembly of model buildings constructed by a retired man with a taste for flights of fancy.

Minneapolis: Geri Sullivan and I do battle with Sun Country. My aim is clear: I want to fly to Seattle. Given that the Northwest Airlines strike has made airline seats rarer than hen's teeth, I'm grateful to have found one only two days later than I originally wanted. I'd like to pay for it. Sun Country would like me to pay for it. Unfortunately, while Visa cards may be welcome in Moroccan bazaars, they aren't welcome at Sun Country, at least not foreign ones. Geri's travel agent harangues the airline but finally Geri heroically sacrifices her credit card to them, and I later learn the joys of taking money out of ATM machines in garages at midnight. Truly, the USA is civilized.

Minn-stf, of which I am now a member, for life (and death will not release me), takes me to the Minnesota State Fair, for TAFF-on-a-stick, so named because going to the Minnesota State Fair is all about food on a stick. The deep-fried pickles weren't on a stick, but they had ranch dressing, and came with Geri's fervent expressions of disgust. The watermelon cotton candy was on a stick, as was the alligator (it was a sausage), and the corndog. The lefkas, Pennsylvania Dutch funnel cake, the milk shake, doughnut and good Methodist cooking weren't. Nor were the embarrassing quantities of soft toys I won on the midway.

Seattle: Kate Schaefer and I decide that we don't look much like one another, really, whatever Tommy Ferguson says. Instead, we work on the small details of life, like putting up the walls of the room where I'm sleeping, and getting me fit to go hiking on the trails around Mount Rainier. This outing is truly one of the highlights of my trip, and not to just to watch chipmunks and ground squirrels hitting on Andy Hooper, in case

he has a spare grape or tortilla chip hidden around his person. 6,500 feet is higher than I've ever been in my life.

Portland: Kate Yule takes me to Powell's Bookshop, and helps me pick my jaw up off the ground. Then she takes me to her gay square-dancing class, where I spend a riotous evening forgetting my left from my right, and learning that yes, this is possibly the most fun I can have with my clothes on.

Eugene: Loren MacGregor takes in his stride the fact that my train is a bus, and the next day takes me to the farmers' market where we witness an extraordinary androgynous creature in a skimpy costume, alternately playing the violin and singing in a strange operatic falsetto. After some uncertainty, Doug Faunt reaches Eugene, and we drive into Eastern Oregon to look at volcanoes. He assures me that nothing has happened recently, which is OK, I suppose, if you don't consider 1917 to be recent; in volcanic terms, that strikes me as pretty much like two seconds ago. I suggest that killing off the TAFF delegate in a volcanic eruption might be a bad idea but instead we drive to Lassen Volcanic National Park to look at boiling mud pots, steam holes and sulphur which is kind of cool. Well, actually, no, but you know what I mean.

I'm now (24 September 1998) in the Bay area, about to head out to the wilds again. After American Civil War history, pioneer history, and geology, it's time to think about the Gold Rush.

Thanks go to Jae Leslie Adams, chauffeuse extraordinaire; to Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis, and Madison fandom; to Geri Sullivan and Jeff Schalles, and Minn-stf, not forgetting Willow the dog; to Kate Schaefer and Glenn Hackney for finding space for me in Seattle, and to Sheila Lightsey for being my New England guide; to Kate Yule (and a very fleeting David Levine), the Rosetown Ramblers and Portland fandom; to Loren and Lauryn MacGregor and the Eugene fans, and Phoebe the world's noisiest cat; and to Doug Faunt for driving me through Eastern Oregon.

Ahead of me lies a fortnight in the Bay area, plus time in Los Angeles and Las Vegas before a return to New York. I'm back in the UK on October 29th, arriving at Heathrow that morning. I expect to be at the next Jubilee meeting in November, if I'm awake.

Snufkin Goes West... #3, August/September 1998

Snufkin Goes West... 4

Maureen Kincaid Speller

Redwood City: I met Allyn Cadogan when she visited the UK in 1986; in twelve years, she hasn't changed a bit. Disconcertingly, she claims I haven't either. In a now familiar motif, we head out of town, get lost in Sonoma but eventually find our way to the small but perfectly-formed Grinding Rock State Park, pitch our tent and head out to eat, discovering possibly the finest restaurant in which I've ever eaten in my life. I begin to understand why Lee Hazelwood and Nancy Sinatra were going to Jackson. What with this and the Rosebud Cafe, it's going to be very difficult to leave.

Columbia: When gold-mining, take the biggest high-pressure hose you can find, wash away every piece of ground without a building on it, strain liquid through a sieve and remove gold. Repeat operation when rest of town accidentally burns down (which these places did with monotonous regularity). Wash spoil into river and send it down to silt up San Francisco Bay. Having said that, Columbia is a genuine, if over-prettified, survival from gold-mining days, and the Victorian hotel we visit is a particular joy to behold.

Volcano: The Indian gathering is almost certainly not what you're imagining. Not a tourist event as such, the people are nevertheless very welcoming to a stray passing Brit. I watch the dancing in the round house on Saturday night, spend time talking with other stall-holders and the docents at the museum, eat Indian tacos and generally have a great time. At night, the sky is so clear that I can see the Milky Way.

Yosemite: On Sunday Allen Baum and Donya White collect me from Volcano and we hit the road to Yosemite Valley. There aren't words enough to describe the scenery as we drive up an incredibly steep road over the mountains, and the sight of the old road clinging to the other hillside is not comforting. The view from the Rim of the World is breathtaking, marred only by the fizzing of the huge power lines overhead. We stop off to admire humongous redwoods and then drive into Yosemite Valley itself in time to watch the sun set over Half Dome, which is shrouded in mist. I've never been anywhere before where I needed to lock my deodorant away in case the bears come for it. And they will. Never

mind Yogi Bear, Yosemite bears know what a cooler looks like, can smell food a mile off, and will rip a car open without a thought. Trust me; I've seen the video. The clerk at the campsite tells me that if I go down to the carpark at 10:30 p.m I can see bears, but I wimp out. However, I do see a coyote in the parking lot and that's enough wildlife for me, thank you. And I see huge mountains, beautiful lakes, and do not die in my ascent of the Mist Trail to Vernal Falls, even though it felt like it at the time. I make many fervent promises to get fitter when I get home. And the squirrels mug me for food.

Palo Alto: Mary Kay Kare drives me round in a cool little red sports car. She takes me to the Winchester Mystery House – built by Sarah Winchester, who was convinced she was haunted by all the ghosts of those killed by Winchester rifles. She was mad, no two ways about it, but the house is a remarkable testimony to one woman's fears, and fascinatingly bizarre, though possibly not what poor Sarah intended. Karen Shaffer nobly indulges my "thing" about sea otters by taking me to Monterey Aquarium. En route, I suddenly realize it's located on the model for John Steinbeck's Cannery Row, so another literary pilgrimage is carried out. Sea otters are furry... and cute... and "think of them as big fuzzy two-year-olds," says the aquarist. The rest of Monterey Aquarium is also well worth visiting. Karen confesses to an urge to eat seafood. I know what she means. Crisis on the home front. Donya drags me out of bed to read an urgent e-mail from Paul. He can't get the petrol cap open on the car. I e-mail instructions, make phone calls, and finally all is well, but not before half of Bay Area fandom has heard the story.

Oakland: Doug Faunt and I become cross-border raccoon smugglers. Raccoons aren't as cute and furry as you think... well, they are, but not when they've broken into your kitchen, trashed it and eaten all the cat food. So Doug has been systematically trapping a family, in between apologizing that I won't see any of them. As luck would have it, he traps the last the night I arrive, and we head for the hills, or at least to Marin County, to release the ungrateful little beggar the next morning. The criminal motif continues when he also takes me to Alcatraz, and shanghais me onto the scow schooner Alma for a day's sailing where, in another rather familiar motif, we are buzzed by the Blue Angels display aerobatic team. I assure you you've not lived until your boat has been buzzed by a small aircraft which flips on to its back as it passes over. Or possibly, you're grateful you have lived. In between times, I potter around San Francisco, visiting the Castro, Haight-Ashbury, Chinatown and City Lights Bookshop, riding a cable car (it's like a slow-motion roller-coaster) and

patronize the local Oakland coffee shop with a vengeance. Buying the air ticket to LA – substitute Southwest for Sun Country – at Oakland airport, I actually see my luggage loaded onto my plane, which is a comfort. Hope it's there when I get off. I really do see the San Andreas Fault from the air, just as everyone said I would.

Los Angeles: I meet Ulrika O'Brien at Orange County Airport at the luggage carousel. For various reasons, I spend portions of the next few days at Orange County Airport, watching with mounting horror the amazing amount of uncollected baggage just left on the carousels. At the end of the day, someone comes along and collects it on a trolley... and probably sends it to Reykjavik. Los Angeles is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly hugely mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist, but that's just peanuts to Los Angeles. There is a good reason why most people have several cars. However, it looks very pretty from 4,000 feet up a mountain at one in the morning. "Are you the DUFF delegate?" asks someone at the LASFS meeting. Now, I can understand Paul being mistaken for Terry Frost... Terry makes suitably salacious comments when told about this unique double mistake. A confusion in dates means that I don't actually get to Las Vegas, more's the pity, but fly back to NY a few days early.

Thanks go to Allyn Cadogan, Karl and Kelly Mosgofian for the pow-wow, to Allen Baum and Donya White for Yosemite and a great party, to Doug Faunt and Lyn Paleo for coffee, craft magazines, cats and raccoons, to Al and the crew of Alma, to Ulrika and Hal O'Brien for cacti, Regency dancing and the complete LA experience, to Bruce and Elayne Pelz for another fine party. Also, to Greg Ketter back in Minneapolis for shipping my soft toys home for me along with the books: truly a prince among book dealers (and I forgot to thank him last time; shame on me). Thanks to Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer for publishing *SGW* while I've been on the road, and doing an excellent job of keeping up with me and keeping everyone else informed of my whereabouts. Thank you as well to everyone who has supported TAFF and enabled me to make this trip.

And lastly, thank you to Paul Kincaid, for love and support, and putting up with everything for the last two months.

Epilogue 1: Snufkin Goes East...

Everyone falls around laughing when I say I'm flying to New York with Tower Air; too late, I find out why, though Moshe Feder and Alyson

Abramowitz finally rescue me, late at night, from Tower's secret terminal at JFK. The saving grace of the flight through hell is the glorious view of Manhattan after dark as the plane skims low across the bottom of the island. NYC is the only place I have revisited and it's great to be "home". They've even laid on a ticker-tape parade for me, although I have to share it with the Yankees baseball team. It's amazing how much a party girl can fit into a day in New York: shopping, a meal, a Broadway show, second-hand CD shops, hanging around in a gay piano bar in Greenwich Village at 3 a.m. and a ride home on the subway. More sedately, Moshe and I visit museums, Central Park, Winnie-the-Pooh, the New York Public Library and a genuine Texas barbecue place, and I plunder J&Rs for CDs and Barnes & Noble for books. I *love* New York and the feeling is mutual; so much so that when I try to leave, the plane breaks down and leaves me sitting on the tarmac for two hours before we are "deplaned" and left to hang around in the terminal, waiting for the world's smallest airport shuttle bus to take us to a hotel. After an hour's wait, I finally jump in a taxi and go back to Moshe's house; he is only mildly surprised to see me. Thursday morning: the driver who is taking me to the airport for the second time swears that if he has to pick me up a third time, he's not going to do it. I feel a touch jinxed myself, but this time I get on the plane, it takes off, and I settle back to enjoy the flight (this time the classical radio channel is playing something worthwhile).

Epilogue 2: Snufkin Comes Home…

London after dark is beautiful. I can see the M25 ringing the conurbation and, as the plane banks in a holding pattern, I can see the South Coast and know that Folkestone is out there somewhere. Finally, we land; I grab my stuff and get off the plane as fast as I can go. Down endless corridors, and more endless corridors, I pass through Immigration, arrive at baggage reclaim just in time to see the Big Bag whizz by and swiftly retrieve it before staggering through the Green Channel, hoping to god they don't stop to ask about the complete CD works of John Eliot Gardiner in my luggage, round another corner, and there at last is Paul, looking much as ever. I'm too damn exhausted to think about bursting into tears so we kiss over the barrier and then I drag myself into Arrivals where Mark and Claire are hovering discreetly in the background. Claire nobly drives us to Folkestone (Paul doesn't drive after dark); when we arrive, there is a four-cat deputation on the doorstep. Alas, they all remember exactly who I am,

and want to tell me all about how awful it has been. Claire and Mark beat a swift retreat, Paul makes tea, and I verify that yes, a cat did piss on my computer monitor, and no, it doesn't work any more. Welcome home. I retire to bed to experience the joys of jetlag.

A final set of thanks to New York fans for hospitality; in particular, Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenberg and Vikki Rosenzweig, as well as Alyson Abramowitz (temporarily in town from the Bay Area) and Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden. Not forgetting Claire Brialey, chauffeuse extraordinaire, for ensuring I made the last part of the journey safely; and, of course, Paul, for being so patient for an extra twelve hours.

Snufkin Goes West... #4, September 1998

2003: Randy Byers

Randy Byers attended Seacon ’03, the 2003 British Eastercon in Hinckley, Leicestershire. The rival candidates were Colin Hinz, Mike Lowrey and Curt Phillips. Randy Byers died in 2017. His report-in-progress had the overall title *The King of TAFFland’s Bent Sprog*.

Platform

I’m not an old fan and tired, but I’m approaching middle age and feeling a little worn around the edges. I look across the Atlantic and see a veritable fountain of fanac (not to mention fetishism) erupting over there, and I want to discover the source of it and seek restoration. Better yet if the source is the local ale, which I’ve heard is almost as good as Seattle’s. Most of all, I want to hang out with my British friends, meet the folks I’ve read about, and tell entertaining lies about it later.

Nominators: Jae Leslie Adams, Eve Harvey, Robert Lichtman, Yvonne Rowse, and Ted White.

Blame TAFF

Randy Byers

Thanks to the many kind supporters of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, I was able to attend Seacon ’03 – my first and, so far, only British convention.

What? Was that a groan of pity I just heard? But no, I actually had a terrific time, even in the windswept wasteland that is Hinckley. It’s true that I never made it out of the hotel bar (I was afraid that all the Old Speckled Hen would be gone before I got back), but I met a shocking number of people that way.

Well, okay, now that I have the obligatory bar joke out of the way (they didn’t really put up a plaque for me, did they?), I’ll confess that I did see a bit of the convention. I was even on a panel or two – and I’m still cursing Sandra Bond for asking me whether TAFF has any purpose in this day and age. I suppose I wasn’t badly behaved enough to give you lot anything to write about (what other purpose could TAFF have?), but I certainly saw my share of depraved behavior. There were the robot wars, for instance, although I had to stand on tiptoes to see even a sliver of it over the cursing, howling mob. (Didn’t see any torches, but I suppose that came in the welding phase.) Then there was Phil Raines and Ian Sorensen’s latest multimedia extravaganza, graced by the ineffable onscreen presence of Julia Daly channeling Jackie McRobert. And there was that final dead dog panel with Jim de Liscard and Chris Tregenza (is that really his name?), but best not go there at this point, I expect.

At a conservative estimate, I spoke briefly or at length with 120 people – at least half of them named Anders – at the convention. (That was the obligatory Anders joke, which I think originated with Dave Hicks, but they say you should always steal from the best.) Inasmuch as I had met perhaps thirty or forty British fans at most before my TAFF trip, this was quite an expansion of my horizons. It’s all very well to meet the jet-setting Yvonne Rowses, Peter Westons, Mark Plummers, and Christina Lakes of the world, but who in North America has ever had the pleasure of hearing Wag speak far too knowledgeably of DVDAs, or Helena wax wry about the horrific gleaming teeth of, which celebrity was it, George Clooney? What right-thinking American has ever heard Dave O’Neill and Del Cotter rehearse an apparently traditional argument about the value of the space

programme? Where else but on yonder side of the Atlantic can one learn from James Bacon the proper way to bellow incomprehensible Irish words, or marvel at Flick's shiny black antigravity device? And what was it that Ronan Murphy gave me to drink when I asked for a sip of water during John Harvey's band's hot, bluesy set? It was as clear as water, but it burned, it burned!

Thanks to TAFF I have a better feel for the shape (and factions) of British fandom (not to mention the Swedes!), and I hope that the people I talked to enjoyed getting a small taste of US fandom as well. My sense is that most of us find our niche in fandom and don't stray too far outside it, and it's good sometimes to be shaken out of our ruts. Fandom is about making contact with like-minded souls, and it's certainly eye-opening and perspective-changing to meet like-minded souls from halfway around the world, speaking a language one can almost barely understand. It stretches even the Cosmic Mind (and more than that if one is foolish enough to try the Astral Pole, which I wasn't), and maybe it makes us better at understanding different experiences and cultural contexts. Worse yet, it gives one a sense of responsibility toward the fans who support this exchange of ambassadors and other good causes in the SF community.

Thus I tip my hat to those who came to the End of the Pier festivities at Seacon '03 and bought a pastry and a silly balloon hat (made by Pat Murphy, no less), or tried their hand (and shoulders, and legs and hips) at the Astral Pole or the wheelchair slalom. (Bravo to Doug Spencer for making it through blindfolded. Very zen!) Likewise for the other fan fund benefit, the auction, which featured Ellen Klages doing her own inimitable cross-cultural translations. ("What? You call dollars 'pounds' over here?") Thanks to everyone who support the fan funds. I look forward to meeting whoever you send over in reprisal for my visit.

And thanks, y'all, for throwing such a terrific party in my honour. And for letting me have more than my share of Old Speckled Hen.

Concourse Progress Report 3, October 2003.

Chapter 1: Why I Ran For TAFF

Randy Byers

It's all about the 'boo. But the 'boo begins to resemble a Nordic wyrd, or weregild. Soon you are transformed through lust for the 'boo into a sacrificial goat, and set with limbs bound on the steaming, blood-stained altar of fandom. Now it is no longer "gosh, that was great!" but always "are you saying my piece is crap?" It's all about calling in favors, analyzing constituencies, defending policy, taking a hit for the team. Transcendent beings in the upper fannispheres heave into view. They begin to Pay Attention. They begin, quite naturally, to Make Demands. (Something about a gene-mod, and final edit on the lettercol.)

And then I woke up.

I have been tremendously impressed by the useful institutional information regarding TAFF to be found at the TransAtlantic Fan Fund archive site. A lot of very smart and experienced people have put down what they know about the history and administration of the fund. It's very calming to read what they've written, because it gives me a sense of the community that surrounds and supports the ritual exchange of ambassadors and drunks that is TAFF. It makes me want to do something useful for the cause, dang it, and so I'm going to offer some thoughts on the reasons I ran for TAFF. Maybe my tale will help someone in the future with their own decision on why and whether to run.

I had to be talked into running for TAFF, although I did some of the talking myself. In fact, I talked about it behind my own back.

I had already formulated reasons why I didn't want to run for TAFF, so I must have given the matter at least that much attention in the past. The reasons? The Usual: I was too shy to handle the attention or to put on an entertaining performance for expectant hosts; I was leery of the controversy and back-biting that too frequently hits TAFF delegates; and I didn't want to put up with the demands of fund administration and attendant fund-raising. All in all, TAFF just seemed like more of a headache than it was worth. If I wanted to visit my British friends in the UK – and I did – I'd just do it on my own dime like a civilized person.

Then at Corflu Valentine in Annapolis in February 2002, a small group of dead dogs tricked me into agreeing to run for TAFF. I wrote it up

in my conreport in *Floss!* 2, making it the final episode and ending with a denial of any agreement to run. “I will not!” I avowed. When I saw the conreport in print, I realized that I had sent myself a message. If I were truly uninterested in running for TAFF, I would have left the whole silly exchange out of the conreport. Clearly I was pleased by the invitation to run and had to make sure everybody knew about it. It was good egoboo.

That much was apparently transparent. At Jack Bell and Anita Rowland’s wedding on the first Saturday of October, Luke McGuff said, “You wouldn’t have told that TAFF story in your Corflu report if you didn’t want to run.”

“You’re right,” I said. “There’s a part of me that wants to run.”

“Well, why don’t you?”

I explained my qualms.

“You could do like Victor and have a team to handle the various jobs,” Luke said. “Jane could handle the money, Andy could do the fund-raising, and I could absorb all the controversy.”

“Now we just need somebody to appear on the panels at Eastercon,” I said. “Maybe Jae would agree to it. But who would write the trip report?”

“How about Jerry?” said Luke.

He almost made it sound like it could be fun, but the race had been announced two weeks earlier and I had already, in response to encouraging noises from Jae Leslie Adams and Claire Brialey, made a strong statement on an online forum that I would not stand for TAFF, for all the usual reasons. Surely it was too late to retract, even if I could overcome my doubts about the wisdom of running. Yet now that I could admit that there was a part of me that wanted to run, I began to wonder whether I had made the right decision. Perhaps I needed to think about it further.

A week or so later, Andy Hooper dropped by the house for a putatively social visit. The subject of TAFF came up, and I confessed that I was thinking about running despite my reservations. Andy spent the next half an hour exhorting me to run. He argued that my chances of winning were fair to good, since I had made friends in the UK at the last three Corflus and through online activity and publishing in fanzines, was well enough known and liked in West Coast fandom through years of con attendance and general hobnobbing, and, as a co-editor of a high-profile new zine, was in a good position to attract attention amongst other TAFF voters as well. As for my reservations, there would be people to help me out with the tough jobs. Andy volunteered to help with fund-raising, and no doubt others would also lend a hand. I wouldn’t have to shoulder the whole burden alone. At that point, Colin Hinz was the only one who had

made his intent to run known, and Andy gave me a rousing TAFF-needs-you speech. If we couldn't find a second candidate, there would be no race.*

* Suzanne Tompkins later told me that Andy had given her a similar working over. She thanked me for sparing her the ordeal of actually sacrificing herself to this particular fannish cause a second time. Don't think you're off the hook that easily, Suzle! Whoever wins this time should knock on your door next time.

I said I'd think about it.

I've described my doubts about running for TAFF, but I haven't described my reasons for wanting to run. Well, I've talked about the first reason, which is probably the least admirable, but possibly the most powerful: I enjoyed the egoboo of being considered a legitimate contender. That was the message hidden in plain sight in my Corflu report, and now to have online friends and Luke and Andy telling me I should run only fed the warm and fuzzy feelings of worthiness. I was finally getting the attention I had always craved from fans I admired.

The second reason was a little more practical: I wanted to visit my friends in the UK. I had been promising to go to a Novacon since the 2000 Corflu in Seattle, but other expenses and priorities kept getting in the way. As soon as I got back from draining my savings account on a three month stay in Micronesia in the spring of 2002, Yvonne Rowse began to pester me about coming to "her" Eastercon in 2003. I wasn't too hopeful about that, but maybe the Novacon after that. Then I remembered that my siblings and I had promised to go to France with Mom in the summer of 2003 for her 70th birthday. So much for other travel plans. Maybe TAFF was the only way to get over there after all.

Finally, I had begun to think more seriously about something that Andy wrote in an online forum – something that we published in a modified form in the second issue of *Chunga*. In it, Andy made the point that TAFF is a form of service as much as, or more than, it is an honour to the winner. The aspects of TAFF that everybody is reluctant to take on – the "headaches," as I described them earlier – are a way of paying fandom back, not only for the trip and consequent recognition, but for all the pleasures and communal benefits that fandom confers on its participants. Ghu knows whether it is simply part of the aging process, or whether my late involvement in the fanzine sector has given me new insight into the work that goes into making fandom a good place to hang out, but this message of service has begun to strike home with me.

All of these reasons combined to ultimately outweigh my old doubts,

and so I finally decided, with much continuing trepidation, to run.

My knowledge of TAFF has been dominated for a long time by a sense of the controversy, scandal, and debate that swirls around it. The Topic A bloodbath in the mid-'80s was the most extreme and horrific fan feud I've ever personally observed. Abi Frost's misappropriation of funds was another low point, and I've also witnessed too many discussions and even panels on the topic of whether TAFF was dead or otherwise worthy of being buried. Add to that the mean-spirited gossip and sniping about TAFF candidates and winners of the recent past, and it wasn't hard for me to develop an extremely negative impression of the fund and its purposes.

That's part of the reason why I was surprised to discover that I wanted to run for TAFF, and why I was doubtful about my sanity when I finally decided to go for it. Had the egoboo gone to my head? The question still hasn't been fully settled. Yet one of the other surprises of the process was how much fun I had in the race – even before I won – and, best of all, how much I learned about myself and about fandom.

It helps that the other candidates – Colin Hinz, Michael Lowrey, and Curt Phillips – are all such strong, interesting, and friendly characters. True *fensch* (to coin an awful word), all three. There's a natural inclination to compare oneself to the other candidates, and this led me to learn more about them. So now I know that Colin published the important and graphically inventive zine *Novoid* in the '90s and likes to tinker with arcane gadgetry, that Orange Mike publishes *Vojo de Vivo* and is heartily engaged in the running (or at least the promotion) of the premier feminist SF convention, WisCon, and that Curt not only participates in Civil War re-enactments but also pursues a deep interest in pulp magazines, not to mention old fanzines. The four of us represented a nice cross-section of modern North American fandom, geographically as well as fannishly – although not, unfortunately, gender-wise.

I also learned that I've got friends all over the place in fandom. That probably should have been more obvious than it was, but I had never really stopped to think about it. The first step in this discovery was the process of soliciting nominations and having a hard time narrowing the list down to the five I ultimately asked: Jae Leslie Adams, Eve Harvey, Robert Lichtman, Yvonne Rowse, and Ted White. (Thanks again, you lot!) Then, when the race had been announced, old fannish friends popped out of the woodwork to ask whether I had lost my mind and whether I needed any help making sure it got left on the other side of the Atlantic, never to be found again. It was good to be reminded that all these years of dead dog parties had been a waste only of brain cells, not of time. Closer to home, it

was very heartening to get so much support from the local fannish crowd, from everyone who voted for me (at least if I can believe them), to folks like Luke, who took on the fanciful role of campaign *Prügelknaben*** and also organized a TAFF sushi outing; carl juarez, who volunteered to design the collection of fanwriting I put out to promote myself; and Jerry Kaufman, who wrote a lovely platform for me that I could not use without looking like a swollen-headed megalomaniac who was trying to squeeze in a sixth nominator.

** Roughly: "whipping boy".

I'm still digesting what I've learned about fandom. As I mentioned at the beginning, I was deeply impressed by the TAFF website and the legacy of information and moral support provided there by past generations of fen. Many of my preconceptions about the general negativity and fearsomeness of TAFF were shattered by that website. I've also found myself paying closer attention to some of the subtler manifestations of fannish maintenance of the fund, such as the people who volunteer to distribute ballots and the people who offer a little extra at the auctions. All the griping, the sniping, the arguments for reform, and the concern that TAFF is going to hell in a handbasket are indications that a lot of fans care deeply about the institution. The fact that it has survived for fifty years, through many different eras of fandom, says something about how important TAFF has been to a lot of different people.

It's still too early to say what the longterm effects of my engagement with TAFF will be. But during the race, at least, I felt charged up and transformed. At the very least, my niche within the community changed because of it – or perhaps it was that my community got larger. It's partly a result of co-editing *Chunga*, too, but more people are aware of me now, and I am aware of more of them. More of you. I also feel a hell of a lot less flippant about TAFF than I used to, and feel a lot more gratitude toward the people who support it and toward the people who have served time for it even at the cost of becoming bitter ex-TAFF administrators. You all have done an amazing thing, keeping this ball rolling for fifty years.

So make sure you vote every year – for whichever candidate or for No Preference or even Hold Over Funds, if that's how you feel. Send a few bucks to the fund. Think about running yourself next time. Let's keep it rolling for another fifty years.

Now, where did that blood-stained altar get to?

Chunga #3, January 2003

Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 1)

Randy Byers

> *They vacillated more slowly than sane folk, but clung with far more than sane fervour to each vacillation.*
> – Dunsany

Then I awoke.

An age had passed. I had forgotten the world. Everything was strange, and everyone a stranger.

Who was I? What had I lost? Where did I lose it? Was it at John and Eve Harvey's house in Tonwell? They rescued me at Heathrow with a sign that read, "WE ARE HERE", and took me to their home in the countryside to watch *Brief Encounter*, a movie about a love that could never be – my first clue. Later, Eve sketched out the ley lines of British fandom, yet another map by which to lose my bearings.

Time ran at a different rate in those fields and pastures, so I nearly missed the train to London the next evening after a fine and not so private curry, and Steven Cain had to come to the station to pick me up. One couldn't be sure of the Underground at that hour. He drove me through dark, strange streets to Walthamstow, and it seemed it would be easy to get lost in those winding rues, too.

So was that really where I lost it? I certainly wasn't missing anything yet that I could tell. I drank coffee with Steven and Alison Scott and woke up late in an empty house the next morning. Alison Freebairn arrived and guided me to Covent Garden for a ducky lunch. We crossed a broad river full of narrow boats and then returned through the London maze to the Cittie of York for pints and further gossip. Is that where I started to change, under Alison's fey Celtic (*faux* Gothic) influence? We pushed on to dinner with Tony Keen, Kate, Kjersti, Fiona, and Tony's bandmate. Not all of them were fans, and to those I wasn't the TAFF delegate but a friend of Alison's, maybe, or an unknown man at the end of the table looking a bit lost.

At the pub later, after Tony and mate had left to rehearse, Fiona explained the green glass fairy tower known to them as the Erotic Gherkin,

then she and Kate disappeared, perhaps taking what I lost with them, if only I could remember. Kjersti knew of TAFF, and a number of other things, while Alison fielded a difficult call, always a queen of dramatics, if not quite yet queen of all the land and London beyond the fields we know.

The train to Bristol the next day took me through Reading and Swindon (although not necessarily in that order), names half-familiar, calling out, trying to claim me. Did I leave it in the station buffet where Christina Lake and her friend, Sue, picked me up? At the house I gave Christina my poor store of gossip before the surprise arrival of Dave Hicks and Cat Coast, down from Newport in Wales. Cat certainly can't have taken it, although I'm not so sure about Hicks. Still, he gave me zines, so I gained as much as I lost, whatever it amounts to. When Doug Bell arrived from soul-expansion via management exercises, we hiked over hills and suspension bridges, where many things – and many lives – have been, not lost, but thrown away.

The next day in Aqua Sulis we might have lost it below Pulteney bridge, which looked like a sliver of Gormenghast, or perhaps it was in the pocket pub where I drank Summer Lightning. But had I even *found* it yet, come to that? So little, and yet so big; nearly invisible, and yet plain as day. At the Bristol SF group meeting I met Nick the *Doctor Who* writer and that legendary cocktail shaker, Richard, who told me tales of local scrumpy tasting tours. The after hours joint, Roxy's, was jumping with giant grooves, and John was very drunk. When Ken and Clarrie left, they may very well have taken it home with them, I was too far gone to take notice.

Next day I was swept, despite my determined efforts, into the Brum vortex. Isn't Birmingham the very antithesis of fanciful spirits? But no, Yvonne Rowse found me forlorn at the station and showed me a sculpture of the the sprog's female incarnation, the Floozy in the Jacuzzi, although the flow was sadly dry this day. Yvonne had briefly encountered an avatar of the sprog herself not so long ago, so she was sympathetic. We met Tony Berry and Ann and Alan Woodford at a pub, where my order of a pint of Butcombe earned a rude joke from the barkeep. Tony's sharp canines made short work of the curry at the Maharajah, where we dined. Then Ann and Alan vanished, while the rest of us forged our way through traffic to the Old Joint Stock, where Ben Jeapes was wibbling about aliens in small presses in front of the Brum SF Group, fairies preserved between wax pages.

Where *was* I? Everyone looked so familiar, as though I had returned too soon to the fields we know. Here was Don Keller himself, but under a

different name... and not so smart and also less enthusiastic, or was it just the alien context? Afterwards, Steve Green explained the American Revolutionary War in terms of the price of tea in China. Vernon Brown wore one dress shoe and one trainer so that he wouldn't be mistaken for the type who wears trainers. Then it was off to Kidderminster and Yvonne's hamster home in the country, where I met husband David and daughter Sally, who was, as Cat had warned, an elf. Son Jack turned out to be an elf as well when we had breakfast at the Dinglespout in Bewdley on the Severn. But the bent sprog is not an elf, despite the allusions.

I chased connections across the Midlands after breakfast, until I arrived again in Walthamstow, where a party was in progress. Bill Burns, looking like a creature out of Froud (but not an elf), greeted me at the threshold of the Cain/Scott domain, where he was wielding his electrical engineering degree against a broken doorbell. Inside, a line of unfamiliar faces receded into the perspectival distance: Tim and Marcia Illingworth, Gail "as in the wind" Courtney, Giulia De Cesare, Stephen Davies, and Mary Burns. Alison Scott presided over the kitchen, while Steven Cain fired up the barbie. The mighty folk gathered, the great lords and ladies of London and its surrounds: Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, Mike Scott, Noel Collyer, Pat McMurray, Max and... Tobes Valois, at last! He arrived shrouded in a great glamour, but it swiftly wore off when he confessed that he had campaigned against me for TAFF.

Surely I had been smitten by the sprog by then, because I finally forgave Tobes this lapse in judgment. Alun Harries appeared with Martin Smith, who had gotten taller since I saw him at Corflatch. Pam Wells brought Caro Wilson and Austin Benson, who gave me detailed directions and a key to their house in Cambridge. A fanfare announced the arrival of Judith Hannah and John – I mean, Joe! – I mean, Joseph! – Nicholas. (I was so dumbstruck – or drunk – that I fumbled the name.) Judith was warm and gracious and regal, and when she kissed my cheek as she left, I felt I had been blessed by a fannish divinity. Perhaps that's when I lost it, become too precious for the love of mere bent sprogs. But the party wasn't over yet, and here was Del Cotter of Reading, who was in fact shorter than he is in cyberspace. Then refugees from another celebration came: Brian Ameringen, Caroline Mullan, and (again) Alison Freebairn. Lilian Edwards called from Oslo, but soon everybody began to leave. Soon it was just me and the two Alisons, who retreated to the Mac in the dark office to consult LiveJournal on Flick's absence, their faces and hands bathed in light, two powerful entities wringing meaning from a difficult world, intent and competent, and I felt safe and happy and at home, but it was probably

only the Calvados and the red wine talking. Talking shit, no less.

Then it was Sunday, and in the early afternoon Steven and Alison pried me out of bed and took me to see Avedon Carol and Rob Hansen. Rob dodged merrily between mounds of mathoms to serve us potatoes, bread, beer, and tea. Avedon's recent eye surgery forced her to look only downward, but she said I sounded very like John Waters. Perhaps it was I who was the bent sprog after all, and this was Dick and not Dunsany. But narcissism is too easy, so scratch that! Lilian cancelled dinner that evening, which was just as well, as life amongst the fantastic creatures of TAFFland was already wearing me down. After a takeout curry dinner, I sped my way back to dreamland.

Next morning I drank coffee and ate pancakes while Alison forged nine Bob notes with a complicated array of superfluous devices, cranky software, heavy card stock, coloured toner, sharp edges, and squabbling offspring, all the while providing a running commentary on all the bent sprogs of British fandom, as Marianne read Enid Blyton to me in an astonishingly accomplished voice, only stopping to ask me what "tit for tat" meant.

"The bear is only pretending not to growl, I expect," she informed me.

Jonathon poured more syrup on his barbecued herb sausages, alien food from an elfin court. I left late from this engaging chaos and arrived in Cambridge with no time to look for what I'd lost. Caro explained her work in mouse transgenics as she led me to the Cambridge Blue, where we were met by Austin and a slowly accruing group. There was Sharon Jones and then Tim Illingworth, and Jim and Carrie and Max and Tobes. It transpired that Jim was, yes, none other than Jim Trash, known to me from rumour of the ethereal world. When he learned that I was headed for Leeds the next day, he offered a ride. Simon and Bug Bradshaw arrived with news of their new home, and there was another Tim, and Sharon's husband, Jonjo – and someone named Silas, who said hello before he vanished, taking what with him? "Huntingdon is not even crap," Bug explained, "it's like constipation."

Austin woke me as the plumbers arrived the next morning, and Jim followed in their wake. Out into the mysterious countryside we drove, lush land I never knew. Jim spoke of Agincourt and longbows and failed fannish romances. We crossed into the northlands, where faces and pence are pinched. I was nearing my fabled destiny. Had I lost it already, or was the sprog, in all its bent glory, still to come?

TO BE CONTINUED...

Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 2) Against the Sneers of Nothingness

Randy Byers

> *Far into the night they rejoiced, quaffing the mead, and by its homely aid gazing into the years of the future, so far as that may be done by the eyes of men.*
> – Dunsany

The fanarchy had elected to send me across the ocean in search of magic – that lost sense of neophyte innocence that once made our lives so precious. All I found was a bent sprog, and then I lost it. Or did it, rather, leave me like a cast-off rag after satisfying its perverse – if not supernatural! – lusts?

It was a difficult question when examined in the sober light of day, and in Keighley and Skipton, outside Leeds, I consulted that lovable old humbug, the Wizard of the West, who knows from bloody moons and bent folk. As called for in his role, D. only smiled and mumbled enigmatically at my question. I looked to my psychopomp, Victor Gonzalez, for translation, but he said only "ginnel" and then "snicket". So I supposed I was to take the strait gate, if I could find it.

There was another witch who lived on those moors, Hazel Ashworth by name – her valued wisdom born of embers. She took us into the Yorkshire Dales to seek my path, and we wandered all day in the blinding, burning sunlight of that winding, wrinkled land. In Bunsall we climbed the ancient church tower, and Hazel rang the bell so loud and strong that surely a guide from the other world should have been summoned to show me the way. I was bewildered that no one and nothing came, not even a curious child. Yet surely a Yorkshire tan is a sign of magic! The Wizard cursed the horrible sun and rolled another fag in the shadows.

Back in Skipton, we walked to the Narrow Boat for a pint of the Black Sheep or the April Fools. We met minds of like bent: Debbi Kerr, Ian Sorensen, and Michael Ashley. Debbi worried that I'd mistake humour for hostility, but Ian nonetheless took the piss – mine and everyone else's

too. (Strange man, must have quite a collection.) The Wizard turned out to be a Philological Consultant of some renown and pondered an inquiry on the roots of “stool pigeon”. He hemmed and hawed, but he was plainly stumped.

“It was a pigeon set on a stool as a decoy or lure,” Debbi explained, and I was suddenly seized by otherworldly hands of fear, somewhere near my genitals.

The Wizard smiled a Stan Laurel smile at my dark suspicions. “Always have a back-up,” he said, pulling a can of dry tobacco from the inner folds of his vestments.

“How D. West was fun,” Ian suggested.

The next day, I abandoned plans for York and travelled with the psychopomp to visit the Wizard again and read his rare treatises on theory and practice. Here at last was the guidance I sought! At last I would gain knowledge of magic that would reap eternal youth and wonder for the fanarchy! But either my mind was hazy from sunburn or else the wizard words were twisty and resistant to absorption. My sensorium had expanded, but no lore had been learned, only performance observed. It was time to move on. Once more I was defeated in my quest.

What a useless drone I was! Why had I been selected? I knew nothing and was incapable of learning. Besides, the quest was mad, magic is only illusion, we all grow old and lose our sense of wonder along the way. I only wanted to go home to friends and family. Why had I come to this strange land?

The psychopomp, looking a bit dishevelled, led me to a train full of foreign folk on holiday. He negotiated a seat for me between two slatternly nymphs of the mundane otherworld, headed from Newcastle to the clublands of Birmingham to dance and seduce unlikely lads. They perked up at my name, but I was not swayed from my difficult duty and was besides too precious for diamond-toothed slatterns. They spoke to each other knowingly in the strange tongue of Newcastle and drank a blue liquor that made them curse like sailors.

We left them behind when we got off at Chesterfield and had a pint at the Barking Badger. It didn’t help. On to Leicester, where we spotted members of our tribe, the infamous Flick and her friend Dr. Pete, who knew which train to take to Hinckley. At last I approached my ultimate goal: the Eastercon. In Hinckley, I would discover the truth. The purpose of TAFF would be made clear, and I would meet me fate. Or at the very least I would meet many wild-eyed folk too fond of bad puns.

We shared a van from Hinckley Station to the hotel with Ellen Klages

and Mike “M. John” Harrison, both on a secret mission related to the Tiptree Award. We found the fabled hotel swarming with hordes of bent sprogs, and I joined a table of them outside in the sun. Yvonne Rowse gave me a bottle of Bishop’s Finger (“You never know where it’s been”), and Lilian Edwards told me I sounded so American now, she was sure I used to sound more sophisticated. Then came James Bacon, manic man, who looked me up and down and exclaimed, “Tobes told me not to vote for you, and I thought you’d be a typical American fan. But you look fucking cool!”

A mixed reception then, and I still wasn’t sure of my chances. I was still taking it all in, one thing at a time and in order, but then I made my way to the bar and Night and Chaos descended. Five days later, I departed the bar a shattered, humiliated husk of my former self.

It wasn’t just the beer, although there was plenty of that: 1774 (the real ale on tap, until it ran out entirely sometime on Saturday), Old Speckled Hen (my favorite), Theakston’s Old Peculier, and Bombardier in bottles, Carling lager on tap, and two commercial ales, Worthington’s and Caffrey’s, which Tony Berry refused to drink when the others ran out, switching to Scrumpy Jack instead, hard cider for a hard man. No, it was more than the beer. For I had found the magic at last. I was at the font, and Neptune presided. Magical energies burst all around, crackling in the air, coursing through my veins, invading my bones and muscles, possessing me with demonic will. The bent sprog turned incubus, and I was taken over, my spirit cast out by the sprog’s dark phantasm to wander the endless blank carpeted corridors like a ghost, while the sprog used my corrupted flesh to drain endless bottles of Old Speckled Hen. This was no job for an inexperienced scribbler, but should have been left for the titans of old, like Walt Willis, Terry Carr, Dave Langford, and Robert Lichtman. I was in over my head.

There were indeed TAFF titans amongst the hordes. Langford Himself appeared, no sprog he, and yet bent by the weight of his many rockets – still fewer, he said, than Charlie Brown’s. Jeanne Gomoll had brought her grandmother’s recipe for Swedish pastries to be tested by actual Swedes. (Well, Johann Anglemark liked it, anyway.) Pete Weston expressed fatalistic dismay at his fanhistorical association with Charles Platt. Ron Bennett travelled one day from his humble shepherd’s cottage in Yorkshire to observe that British fandom has a far smaller Jewish component than American fandom, and why is that? Greg Pickersgill bewailed the death of British fanzine fandom while Pete Young pestered him for old fanzines. Pam Wells baked a magic cake, and Maureen

Kincaid Speller wore a balloon. Christina Lake tried to talk me into giving the Astral Pole a go, while Lilian Edwards avoided Victor Gonzalez (and thus me). Tobes Valois organized a TAFF party in a phone-booth, but TAFF did not yet appear to be a glimmer in James Bacon's eye.

I was tortured by Julian Headlong. He put me on four panels, where I sweated and tried to remember how to spell invisibility. But I was protected on the Fanzine Review panel by Dave Hicks, who read a nasty, hilarious fragment of an old review by Joseph Nicholas from *Space Junk* and argued that KTF reviews really did improve the subsequent publications, *ahem*. Mike Abbott and Pam Wells discussed their various gambits in *Attitude*, first trying outsiders like Jim de Liscard, whose opinions weren't welcomed by the insiders, and then giving the column to Paul Kincaid, who was in turn criticized for excessive negativity, dude. On the Fannish Milestones panel, Greg Pickersgill held sway on a variety of topics, with occasional contributions from Spike Parsons, Pam Wells, and Sandra Bond. I hid behind my pint of ale until Sandra demanded that I justify TAFF. I vowed then and there to escape further torment, and much to my relief the Fandom Without Frontiers panel was cancelled after fifteen minutes for lack of an audience, while my hoarse, desperate pleas charmed Pat McMurray into taking my place as moderator on Future Worldcons.

Back in the bar, I consulted with other legends. Victor introduced me to Graham Charnock, who was shocked that I'd read two issues of his '70s zine *Wrinkled Shrew*. Victor called the Wizard of the West and put the long gafiated Charnock on the line, and the Wizard demanded that Charnock give the phone back to Victor, asking Victor if he'd seen any actual ID. But Charnock was too drunk to tell me what I needed to know, so I turned to Rich Coad, editor of '70s zine *Space Junk* and icon of my early years in fandom. Rich clashed with the titans when he danced with Pete Weston to the tunes of John Harvey's band, the Jack of Herts. The ensuing cataclysm momentarily drove my quest out of mind. I was not helped to regain it by Charnock's Astral Leauge deaf lemon reunion show, where Fan GoH Chris Evans crushed credible response with his reading of Pat Charnock's old dissertation on how women descend from bats.

I reached an epiphany: Knowledge is pain. The more I learned, the more damage I took. Was the fanarchy's desire for magic worth this abuse? Dave O'Neill and I agreed that if Libertarians wanted to live in a tin can in orbit, they should be encouraged to do so, thus freeing us from their posts on Usenet. But we stared in gobsmacked, slackjawed, shitfaced horror at Del Cotter when he confessed that he would gladly live with

uncontrollable Usenet troll Jordan Bassior if it meant he got to live in space. There are some things we are not meant to know! Wag explained that DVDA is both a new digital music format and a form of pornography. Elena bragged that she was good at blowjobs. Doug Bell asked, “How do you stop a dog from humping your leg?”

“I don’t know,” I admitted.

“Suck him off,” said Doug, who promptly lost the GUFF race to Pat McMurray, although just barely, despite that.

It was all too much. The weight of this knowledge was bending me. Jim de Liscard wanted to know what I’d done to deserve TAFF, and I dodged this by pointing out that he was widely held to be the most perverse man in fandom. Alison Freebairn had said that no one else can lick your shoes and get away with it, and Kjersti had agreed. Alison dreamed of a wedding with a greased Jim clinging to her ankles and dragged behind like a veil. Jim seemed pleased by this news.

Was this the magic I sought? Was this where fanarchy led, to mere perversion? Could this really be the final secret? I made my way to the bar to order another bottle of Old Speckled Hen. Anders Holmström appeared out of nowhere, as he always did when I placed an order at the bar. He was always wearing a different outfit than the last time I’d ordered, and he certainly deserved the award he received for best hall costume. He talked me into joining RanCon – a Robert Rankin convention in Sweden that I would never be able to attend. Was I being used? He also talked me into buying a hardcover copy of Mary Gentle’s *Grunts* from Rog Peyton – a book I would never read.

I danced with Eve Harvey and Yvonne to the Jack of Herts, trying to learn from their witchy moves. Eve wasn’t sure that the convention could cover my room for five nights, and I wasn’t sure what the precedents were. Was I supposed to protest? I was thirsty. Ronan Murphy offered me a clear drink, but it was fire and not water. I stumbled to the bar and Arfer Cruttenden offered potent sips from his secret, sacred flask.

Perhaps the lessons were over, and we could get on with the inebriation. But no, in Linda Krawecke’s room Jimmie Robertson taught me that E had reduced the number of fistfights at clubs and thus was tolerated by the police, and Caroline Mullan delivered a seminar on Kipling on a couch in the bar. Austin Benson considered the merits of the contenders for the Clarke Award, and Alison Freebairn explained to Dave O’Neill that cellphones should come with buttons for standard messages, one for “I’ll be at the office until late,” and another for a drunken and piteous, “I love you so much,” for when the bar closes.

So much to learn! Who hated whom, who punched whom thirty years ago, the broken trail of sex, fanzines, clashing egos, and other fanac. Everyone sought me out with stories, with a nip o' the creature, and with questions about TAFF, trying to get a piece of my momentary magic. Martin Smith got wound up, and who was it who talked him down? Not Alun Harries this time, who looked calm and collected as he slouched into one couch after another, following the conversational rounds. Flick and Alison and Elena tortured their tits with gleaming, glaring corsets, creating slabs of architectural flesh that seemed more imposing than erotic, but perhaps that was the point. Tobes explained that Yvonne was not a truff, but I still didn't understand the concept – some kind of killfile for trufen. The next American TAFF delegate, it seemed, should be named Shaggy or Fanny. Sheila Lightsey looked miserable, and so did Squaddie, who spoke the truth: "*Fortissimo* does not mean out of tune." Pickersgill opined that I should be using the TAFF money to buy rounds, "to give it back to the people", but I never learned the art of rounds – a social game with a secret history and perhaps more than a hint of gamesmanship. Tony Keen perked up when I bought him a round, it's true, but we never had a real conversation. People kept asking Mark Plummer, "Do you want the money now?" He took what they gave. Jae Leslie Adams wondered whether she'd told us about her condition. Steve Green wondered (again) whether he'd told us about his vomit-filled boots. Cat Coast was the only one amidst the noise who looked serene – that is, until Douglas Spencer's touch of Zen as the blind wheelchairman on the slalom course at the End of the Pier.

It was Tuesday morning, the convention was over, time to go to bed. I could not get back into my room, the door would not open, so I wandered the halls in a daze, lost and lonely and overwhelmed. There, in a dark passage, I found my deposed spirit huddled in desolation, and the bent sprog made way, leaving spent flesh to be reinhabited by lost self. Somehow I found Jim de Liscard and Chris Tregenza again, and they spewed smoke and spun fantasies of silly conventions of the future until my reunification was complete and I could re-enter my room.

I had been transformed, but into which kind of monster? A few hours of restless sleep later, I joined the hordes of refugees escaping the hotel. Yvonne drove me to a safe house in Beaconsfield, where my abused humours rebelled and my stunned systems collapsed. Julia Daly served fresh food, red wine, and witty gossip while I coughed and convalesced. Yvonne proposed that gossip is more interesting than fanzines, because it contains more of the truth. I pondered whether I was suffering birth pangs or death throes.

Too soon, too soon, Julia dropped me at Heathrow. I was not sure I could find my way through that maze in my shattered state. I stopped for a cup of coffee, and lo, two spirit guides appeared in my time of need, this time in the guise of Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, on their way, like me, to the Madison Corflu. We spoke of the absence of Leroy Kettle at the Eastercon. Mark observed that the ’50s fans resurfaced in the ’80s, so it was about time for the ’70s fans to reappear, renewed by their encounters with the bounteous mundane – the fields we’d like to think we know, or perhaps prefer we didn’t.

I sagged in my plastic chair, full of hope and dread, still uncertain of the chances despite all I’d learned. Claire told a tale about a cake baked in a pan that had last been used to cook fish and then only partially cleaned. Some pieces of the cake tasted sweet, and some tasted fishy. “It was the cake version of Russian roulette,” she said.

Which is probably the best that any of us can hope for, and reason enough for wonder after all.

Chunga #8, September 2004

2009: Steve Green

Steve Green attended Anticipation, the 2009 Worldcon in Montréal, Québec, Canada. The rival candidate was Tom Womack.

Platform

Since encountering fandom circa 1974, I've been a fanwriter, fanzine publisher, cartoonist, convention organizer and FAPA vice-president. From 1987-96, I co-edited the newszine *Critical Wave*; its online resurrection was announced in 2008. My own fanzines include *Thunderbox* (with my wife Ann) and *Gaijin*. I'm an sf fan, a horror fan, a comics fan, a telefantasy fan; I see no boundary fences. In "real life", I've been a newspaper reporter, radio pundit and film journalist. I've long had transAtlantic links, with regular columns in Seattle's *Apparatchik* and the Bay Area's *Drink Tank*. Can't wait to make some more North American friends.

Nominators: Randy Byers (US), Lloyd and Yvonne Penney (Can), Mark Plummer (UK), Martin Tudor (UK), Peter Weston (UK)

Taff Notes: Prelude

Steve Green

I blame Martin Tudor. We were at his home in Willenhall, north of Birmingham, helping my younger goddaughter celebrate Halloween with the offspring of various other local fans, when the suggestion arose again that I should stand for the TransAtlantic Fan Fund. Only seven months earlier, I'd told Chris Garcia point blank that there was no chance I'd ever put myself forward, but that was a different life, before I lost Ann, and Martin was convinced campaigning – and maybe even winning the race – would give me a renewed direction. That he was also about to become single may have fuelled his own enthusiasm for the project; whatever the case, he beat me down.

Ironically, our initial hurdle was actually finding someone to stand against me, since TAFF's rules explicitly prohibit a one-horse race (in contrast, I believe the Canadian Unity Fan Fund has never been contested). Perhaps because the target Worldcon was Canadian (indeed, this would be the first time TAFF was aiming north of the border), there didn't seem to be the usual groundswell of interest on the eastern side of the Pond.

(Chris had suffered similar problems when he first attempted to stand, back in 2007, and that race had no sooner launched than it was called off due to the cancellation of the planned Eastercon. By the time another event had taken its place, all bets were off and both administrators found themselves locked in post for an extra year.)

Eventually, John Coxon offered to step forward and adopt much the same stance as Mike Simpson had taken during Martin's second and successful stab at the honour, quietly backing his opponent's campaign. The fact that I'd be following in my *Critical Wave* co-editor's footsteps with an equally contrived ballot didn't altogether sit well with us, but the alternative was to postpone my own run and leave poor old Bridget Bradshaw holding the reins for an unprecedented fourth year. In the final event, John was forced to drop off the ballot when he discovered the trip would coincide with a friend's wedding, but Tom Womack unexpectedly announced his willingness to ensure the race would go ahead. You could probably have heard the sighs of relief on the Eastern Seaboard.

Thankfully, neither of us encountered any difficulties with recruiting

a full set of nominations. Tom got the backing of Geri Sullivan and Vicki Rosenzweig (USA), Clare Boothby, Liz Batty and Alison Scott (UK), whilst I notched up support from Lloyd & Yvonne Penney (Canada), Randy Byers (USA), Peter Weston, Mark Plummer and Martin (UK).

The new line-up was formally unveiled at Novacon 38, with a voting deadline set just after the Bradford Eastercon. Better still, Tom and I were both attending the latter gathering, so Peter Sullivan was able to organize an informal video uplink and interview us both for the Ustream network, scoring another first for TAFF (and possibly fan funds in general).

We also took part in a panel discussion together, where I have to confess to being slightly the worse for over-refreshment (I was finding at the time I could make it through the first day of a convention, but the second often proved more of a struggle, as I hit a kind of emotional tipping-point; this would be something I'd have to watch out for if I made it to Canada). Tom came off pretty well, which fell in line with his hope that standing for TAFF would boost his profile outside his usual online prowling grounds.

Less than a week later, Bridget announced the results: a total of 175 votes cast, with a really healthy turnout on both sides of the Pond and an absolute majority for yours truly. Now all I had to do was organize my itinerary around the Worldcon, book my flights and... ah, renew my passport, which had expired in 1993.

From that factoid, it won't surprise anyone to learn that I was by no stretch of the imagination (even a scientifictional imagination) any kind of globetrotter. Indeed, the only previous time I'd boarded a plane was for a brief stay in Paris with Ann back in 1986. We'd attended the 1990 worldcon in Holland, but that was back in the days of *Critical Wave*, so I'd taken Martin's and my stock of back issues over in the boot of my Ford Escort. This was an entirely different league of travel.

After a couple of hiccoughs with my passport photographs, the first set of which were rejected because my head appeared too large (no sniggering at the back, please), I booked the initial flights to Montreal (via Newark, although that allowed me to depart from an airport seven miles down the road rather than the far more distant Heathrow or Gatwick). The local sf group was kindly organizing accommodation for the five nights prior to Anticipation, meaning I could chillax before plunging fully into the traditional worldcon maelstrom (likely to be even more hectic than usual, given my TAFF status), and the convention itself had offered to cover my stay at the designated "party hotel", the Delta. I also added flights from Seattle to San Francisco and on to Las Vegas, since all three

of those locations had been pretty much nailed in place the moment I'd decided to stand.

A few sections of the journey remained tantalizingly unglued, however. My initial plan to travel to Vancouver by rail collapsed after I discovered that not only would this mode of transport cost considerably more than all the flights combined, but there was little or no active fanbase interested in extending a welcome. Thankfully, I was offered not only a place to stay in Toronto, but a chauffeured drive there straight from my hotel, courtesy of Yvonne Penney.

The final – and in some ways most problematical – chunk of the jigsaw proved to be the gap between Las Vegas and New York (I'd already booked the return flight from Newark, figuring that would keep the Immigration & Naturalization Service off my back, which proved to be very nearly correct). An offer to stay in Denver was first extended, then retracted, once my would-be host discovered enthusiasm for my visit approached Vancouver-like proportions. Enter stage right Mr Steven Silver, publisher of this very organ, who stepped in with a very welcome invitation to spend a few days at his home in Chicago.

And with that, as they say, all was set. "Their" optimism was, of course, severely misplaced.

[This is the opening extract from Steve's TAFF notes, which will eventually be rewritten into a full report and released on CD. Full details will be posted at taff.org.uk, the fund's official website, which currently contains the ballot for the westbound race to the next year's UK Eastercon between Anne Murphy & Brian Gray (standing jointly) and Frank Wu. – *Steven H Silver*]

Argentus #9, 2009

Westward Bound!

by Steve Green Esq

[We are privileged to present a second extract from this year's TransOceanic Friendship Fund report. In the initial memoir, Mr Green described his dash by horseless carriage to Birmingham Skyport, whereupon he boarded an Imperial Airlines flight for the Colonies.]

Although many have expounded the view that travel broadens the mind, I knew the limits of my own patience well enough that the first three days of my journey were passed alone in my private suite, eased into the embrace of Morpheus with occasional doses of the cocaine supplied by my club's private chemist. After all, there is only so much open water one can gaze upon without yearning for even the fleeting stimulus of one of Mr Charles Stross's latest penny dreadfuls.

Come the final morning, however, I set my mind to preparing for my arrival on the island of Manhattan. At least I need not worry about my entrance into the Americas; as the proud possessor of a British passport, I was guaranteed a standard of civility, might I even say subservience, denied those relying upon documentation issued by such lesser nations as New Germany, Texas and the Belgian Confederation.

Furthermore, the fact that I was representing the beating heart of the British Empire at only the second-ever World Scientific Romance Festival outside the United Kingdom brought with it both a heightened public profile and a great responsibility towards those fellow literati who had sponsored my voyage. TOFF had yet to be created on the first occasion the Festival had visited the shores of the New World, though any ambassador to San Francisco in 1906 might have regretted their decision to take part in that particular cultural expedition.

I noted with considerable interest the lead article in the current edition of *Waxen Skins*, an "amateur journal" co-edited by Mr Mark Plummer and Miss Claire Brialey (it appears Croydon society has now sunk to the point wherein unmarried individuals can engage in journalistic collaboration with no fear of disapprobation). I was shocked to learn many in the Americas currently refer to the focus of our shared literary fascination as "sci-rom", a phrase which prompted such a coughing fit I had to rip off my cravat for fear of relapsing into unconsciousness.

At that very moment, the claxon announced we were now close enough to our destination to perceive the distant coast of New York with the aid of an enhanced monocle, perhaps even the Statue of Britannia which greets all approaching that port. I began to pack my trunk, my anticipation of the week ahead elevated with a short drag upon my opium pipe. It was going to be a fascinating trip.

Journey Planet #5, January 2010
(Alternate History theme issue)

LV Confidential

Steve Green

I woke to a gentle but insistent rapping on my bedroom door, opening my eyes in time to see a slice of daylight frame Nic Farey's leering visage: "Coffee, tea... or hair of the dog?"

This was my first full day in Las Vegas and I had a sneaking suspicion opening it with alcohol wouldn't be the wisest move. Best leave that to the second drink. Better still, leave both for a couple of hours and catch up on my sleep: three weeks and five cities into my TAFF trip, I was beginning to feel more than a little burned out even before Bobbie Farey and I decided to chat until six in the a.m.

I'd flown in from San Francisco the previous morning, the first eastward stage of my tour. As Nic drove me back to his and Bobbie's place in Cape Cod Drive, I mentioned the massive billboard advertising machine guns which had been the second thing I'd spotted after my arrival at McCarran International (the first, appropriately, was a row of *Star Wars*-themed one-armed bandits); he recalled a store in Edgewater, Maryland, which bore the simple banner Liquor Bait Ammo (I imagined a typical conversation: "Hey, Earl, wanna get drunk and shoot some fish?").

Cape Cod Drive is located in the Sunrise Manor neighbourhood of Clark County, on the eastern side of Las Vegas. Apparently, it's close to a geological fault line named for the nearby Frenchman Mountain, but – like my stay in California – this section of my journey would thankfully remain free of seismic shifts.

In more welcome proximity – just a couple of blocks away – was the Aces & Ales pub on South Nellis Boulevard, formerly part of a chain but bought out by partners Ryan Johnson and Keri Kelli earlier that year to become an oasis for fans of "craft beers". I'd barely dropped off my luggage before Nic was suggesting he and I go show the locals how pool should really be played, which immediately indicated he had no conception of just how inept I am at any game involving balls, sticks, racquets or, to be frank, scoring.

I was far more in my element downing a bottle of Rogue Hazelnut Brown (6.2%) and chatting with Lindsay, one of the two charming barstaff on duty. Before too long, I'd switched to the Lost Coast Brewery's 8-Ball

Stout (6.3%), Nic was off demonstrating his skills with a cue and I was learning from Bobbie how she and Ann bonded over a lengthy chat one Novacon. I never knew: even now, my wife continues to surprise me. By the time Nic returned from his match, Bobbie was telling me about her ambitions to write a series of children's detective stories featuring "The Cranberry Twins", I'd worked my way up to Arrogant Bastard (one of the pub's most popular brews and a hefty 7.1%) and it was time for the three of us to head into Glitter Central.

We landed in Hennessey's Tavern on the legendary Fremont Street, "home of the world's largest pint" (60oz, for anyone who's counting – and no, I didn't: food was the priority this time). Back outside, I was finally able to catch the massive lightshow playing on the canopy which stretches over Fremont: a deafening display dedicated that evening to Queen and opening with "We Will Rock You" (it certainly did). Aware that I'd accidentally left my walking stick behind in Toronto, Nic suggested I take the opportunity to visit a nearby souvenir store and pick up a replacement, which made perfect sense; no wonder Nic looked vaguely bemused when I exited instead with a Stetson, even if he conceded it did look pretty good on me.

I'd had the good fortune to arrive during a week-long tribute to Woodstock, so pretty soon the three of us were watching veteran Who tribute band The Wholigans blaze through their heroes' repertoire. Nic even got to chat with them afterwards, and was rewarded with a signed drum skin, which was swiftly given pride of place on the lounge wall soon as we got home. (Synchronicity: as I transcribed those particular audionotes, the documentary Listening To You was playing on cable, with footage from The Who's appearance at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival.)

When I finally re-emerged from my bedroom the following day, we'd already been joined by James Taylor, wife Teresa "Tee" Cochran and Barbara Young, the first of which had volunteered to pilot Nic's van on its 25-minute journey over to Arnie and Joyce Katz's home on some Astronaut-Named Drive (hence this epicentre of Vegas fandom being known locally as "the Launch Pad").

I felt highly honoured as Arnie led me into his lounge and introduced the many Vegrants who'd turned out to welcome me to Glitter City, among them John Wesley Hardin and teenage daughter Colette, his girlfriend Jacqueline "Jacq" Monahan, Ron and Linda Bushyager, Bill and Roxanne "Roc" Mills, Rick and Laurie King, Lori Forbes, Jolie LaChance, Ross Chamberlain, Bryan Follins and Derek Stazenski. At the evening's highpoint, there were nearly two dozen fans in attendance.

Joyce unveiled a smoky-flavoured dish involving sausage, beans and maple syrup (I really must ask her for the recipe), then the party split into two: some headed into Arnie's study for a chat and a smoke (he was being particularly vocal about various fans' "bleating" about the results of the fannish Hugos presented in Montreal), whilst Nic and Bobbie got together with Bill and Tee for a performance by the Vegrant Sympathy Orchestra. Meanwhile, the rest of us took it turns to contribute to the latest issue of Home Kookin' (undoubtedly available online at eFanzines.com).

It was around this time that I asked Colette if she'd ever seen *The Rocky Horror Show*, given she was wearing a t-shirt from a Chicago stage production; she hadn't, or its film incarnation, which led me to query why she was wearing the shirt.

However, this is not quite the same as John's tongue-in-cheek suggestion in *Home Kookin'* that I "demanded" his 14 year-old daughter remove said garment, although his accompanying claim that I later disappeared into a bedroom for a half-hour with his girlfriend is entirely true, if equally innocent. (TAFF is many things, but sex tourism isn't one of them, at least not on my watch.)

I was further honoured when Joyce divided up the cake she'd made to commemorate my visit and my own slice was placed upon a plate illustrated by Bill Rotsler (several of the others featured Biblical scenes; was there a Pontius Plate, I wondered). It's little wonder Joyce has a reputation as a great hostess, although I was told she'd made an especial effort for my visit, which was very touching.

Shortly before the party wound down around 3 a.m., I asked Arnie if I'd made a better or worse impression than 1993 TAFF delegate Abi Frost, whose visit had become the stuff of legend. His reply was short and to the point: "Well, considering that 25% of Las Vegas fandom gafiated after meeting her, you couldn't have made a worse one." I laughed when he followed this with a suggestion I think about moving to Nevada, to be told: "But I said the same thing to Nic." Damn it, I'm doomed.

Sunday saw another the return of another TAFF-related tradition, this one individual to the Farey household: the TAFF Cookout. First held in 2002, when Tobes visited Nic and Bobbie in Maryland, the idea was dusted off for James Bacon two years later, although Nic had experimented on the latter occasion with fried turkey instead of chicken.

First to arrive were another James (Miller) and Kevin, two ex-workmates of Nic's whom I'd met briefly at Aces & Ales on Friday, both quickly recruited to help set up the oil cooker in his backyard (for the record, a four-pound chicken needs 20 minutes at 350°F). Soon after, the

usual suspects began to drift in: James and Tee, Scott Anderson, John and Colette, Jacq, Lori, Derek, Jolie and Barbara. Arnie and Joyce had initially hoped to join us, but she was feeling rather drained by the previous evening's festivities.

Both conversation and beer flowed into the evening, with James and Tee the last guests to leave, although John and Jacq returned around 10:40 p.m., after dropping Colette off at home. A little later, I walked in on Bobbie and Jacq in Nic's office and asked if I was intruding; "It's okay," Bobbie reassured me. Not entirely convinced, I repeated the question, with the same answer. It was then I realized I'd reset my subtlety receptors way too high to cope with these particular ladies' politeness, made my excuses and exited.

The following lunchtime, Nic and I headed out to get a few supplies from a nearby shopping precinct (I noted the "smokers only" parking zone in front of one retailer; it's swings and roundabouts for the nicotine-addicted), before heading over to the Boulder Strip to check out the Sam's Town Hotel & Gambling Hall. Its most famous attraction is "Mystic Falls", a glass-roofed atrium with its own rock waterfall, nightly laser displays and animatronic beavers (cheaper than a call girl, I guess). I considered it a suitable occasion for the two of us to go wild, so suggested I get in a round at Billy Joe's Bar (one of the site's many hostelries; there's also an 18-screen cineplex and 56-lane bowling alley), then lay down a bet. Nic didn't need his arm twisted for long, but I was slightly taken aback when the most exotic bottled beer on offer was Newcastle Brown Ale. As for the gambling, we each blew a dollar in one of the bandits; not exactly big time, but you can hardly go to Vegas and not indulge (in fact, there's probably a local ordnance against it).

There was a minor hiccough when I bought some beer for us all on the way back. The credit card I tried to use was perfectly valid (and I was carrying two back-ups, to cover all contingencies), but the terminal kept demanding my zip code (presumably as some form of marketing exercise) and the staff went rather blank when I tried to explain we don't have those in the UK (what, the entire planet isn't simply the USA writ large?). At least they accepted cash.

By the time we got back to home base, James and Tee were waiting with Bobbie, then the five of us walked round to Aces & Ales to celebrate James's birthday. John and Jacq were already there, digging into a pizza, so I ordered an Arrogant Bastard to accompany a "patty melt" (which I believe – shock horror – was the only burger I bought during the entire trip). It later struck me this was the second fannish birthday party I'd

attended in the past 10 days, the first being Andy Hooper's shindig in Seattle.

Back at the bar, I got another pint in for myself and Nic, then the pair of us sacrificed another dollar each at the bartop keno machine. We'd clearly become hopelessly addicted, so I perused a leaflet entitled When the Fun Stops, a guide to diagnosing whether you have a gambling problem (intriguingly, virtually all the warning signs also worked if you substituted "producing fanzines" for "gambling"; if only Martin Tudor and I had read a copy before we launched *Critical Wave*).

Nic had confessed to me on the Friday he'd told the staff there that not only I was a journalist, but I would be writing about my visit when I got back to the UK (I was producing an occasional real ale column for the Sunday Mercury at that time, so at least I was able to keep his promise and anoint Aces & Ales as my spiritual "local").

This might explain in part the warmth of the hospitality I received from Lindsay, though I suspect she's a naturally friendly girl; I got a "safe trip back my way" hug when I mentioned my next stop was Chicago (she originally hails from Michigan).

The evening progressed well, even after Nic and I bewildered all within earshot by singing "My Old Man's a Dustman" to the theme from *Match of the Day* (*I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue* should try that one). Chas 'n' Dave, the next (de)generation.

I managed to squeeze in nearly six hours' sleep before Nic provided my wake-up call at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, and this time I was happy to take up his offer of coffee.

Around 90 minutes later, we were heading down the Strip so that he could point out a few more landmarks before my hop to O'Hare, among them the Luxor and its Egyptian frontage, the Eiffel Tower replica built into Paris Las Vegas, the spectacular fountains outside the Bellagio and one of Glitter City's two Statues of Liberty, outside the New York – New York (the same one, in fact, which was accidentally used by the US Postal Service for a stamp design in April 2011).

As we neared McCarran, I realized just how busy the airport was: two aircraft came into land in just the few moments Nic paused his van at traffic lights on the approach road. We'd made good time, fortunately; I finally got through security at 11:45 a.m., with the on-schedule Flight 986 due to start boarding at noon. I headed for the escalator (attractively decorated with foot-long silver models of various 'planes), and couldn't fail to notice the massive sign which sends weary travellers upon their way: What happens in Vegas Stays Here.

Now that wouldn't be any fun for a TAFF report, would it?

As I look back now to my time in Nevada and the people I met there, I'm reminded of a line in the movie *Casino* when an ageing mobster recalls his ex-wife: "She knew how to take care of people, and that's what Vegas is all about."

Couldn't agree more.

Beam #3, May 2011

2010: Anne and Brian Gray

Brian Gray and Anne KG Murphy (now Anne Gray) attended Corflu UK in Winchester, Hampshire, and Odyssey 2010, the UK Eastercon at London Heathrow. The rival candidate was Frank Wu.

Platform

He’s a microbiologist. She’s an engineer. Together they run cons, playtest games, sing and dance, concoct gustatory delights, write zines and blogs, perform sketch comedy, and generally have a good time doing anything from reading sf to chopping wood. (We didn’t say they aren’t weird. Oh YES, they’re weird.) They promise to use their powers only for good, and not run scientific experiments upon unsuspecting international fandom... however tempting that might be. But as trained observers, they look forward to documenting cultural differences across the Atlantic divide in a trip report. An eeeeeevil trip report. With photographic evidence. And tissue samples....

Nominated by: John Scalzi, Steven H Silver, Geri Sullivan (North America), Paul Cornell, Cheryl Morgan (Europe)

Anne and Brian Trip Through Corflu

(2010 TAFF Report, Part I)

Introduction
Anne Gray, August 2010

A lot of things have changed since Brian and I first decided to run for TAFF in the Fall of 2009. Back then I was living in Yellow Springs, Ohio, working as a Human Factors Engineer for Klein Associates, a job that involved a lot of traveling to different sites to study how people worked so we could put together requirements for systems design. Brian was living in Ann Arbor, Michigan, working on his PhD in Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Michigan. I had moved to Ohio from Ann Arbor at the beginning of 2009 for the job. In the beginning of 2010, I would move back, three days before we began the TAFF trip on March 17. Then we would take the trip, return to Ann Arbor, get married, and move again to the two-bedroom apartment we're in now. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

In December of 2009, still waiting to hear the TAFF election results, we began to suspect that I was pregnant. We hadn't exactly been trying, but we'd given it a couple opportunities in November, and signs were saying "yes." We weren't worried about the TAFF trip, however, since given the probable conception dates, it was likely to come during my second trimester, a period when everybody recommends you take a trip anyhow if you're pregnant (some call it a "babymoon") because your energy picks up, nausea usually goes away, and you're not yet so heavy that travel is overly uncomfortable or tiring. In fact, if I was pregnant, the TAFF trip was starting to sound like the perfect opportunity to get in some international travel before the baby came. With the added bonus that I would probably quit my job so I wouldn't have to constrain the trip by available vacation days.

Happily, we turned out to be both pregnant and selected to be TAFF delegates – a lot of happy news to fill the second half of December! I was otherwise having an exhausting first trimester, trying to keep up with

work, figuring out when to tell them (odds of miscarriage are roughly one in 5 during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, so many people wait until after then to spread the word), and whether to quit the job or ask to work it remotely from Michigan. I started to let people at work know I was pregnant at 8 weeks, in mid-January. I also went to ConFusion and we started to let the word out to Fandom. Before we hit the 12 week point I got appendicitis and they took my appendix out; between that and a gastrointestinal infection two weeks later I basically lost most of February to illness and recovery (and continued first trimester exhaustion). During that period we decided that I would return to Ann Arbor post haste, and not try to keep working. Nearing the end of February at that point, I still had to quit my job and move and we still had to plan most of the details of our TAFF trip.

One of the few things we had settled about our trip by then was that it would start and end with a convention. It would end in the first week of April, after Eastercon, which was to be held near Heathrow Airport in London. It would begin in mid-March with the small fanzine fan convention called Corflu. This was the suggestion of a few people, especially Geri Sullivan, who advised us it would be a relaxed setting in which to meet a number of people who would also be at Eastercon, and who might also help us plan the rest of our trip. It definitely was a nice way to start the trip, especially because there were a lot of former TAFF delegates there, and a lot of other very supportive people as well, some of whom we knew already. So this, the first part of our trip report, will cover getting to Corflu Cobalt and our whole visit to the convention and to Winchester, England, where it was held.

Brian's Take on Corflu
Brian Gray, September 2010

Writing up the first instalment of our TAFF trip report falls to me, now, as Anne is busy having her brain epigenetically reprogrammed to focus upon all things Baby. Speaking of which, the Third TAFFling has joined us at last, and has revealed unto us her name: Rosalind Jane. Wave "hi" through the text file to everyone, Rosie!

"Waah?" (NB: a broad transliteration. It may have been accurate to type "waanngrrrggh?" but that lacks the panache of the traditional spelling.)

That's close enough to a wave for me.

Also, it is here that I insert my self-defense disclaimer: I find myself terribly amused that I'm the one to write up the TAFF report for the first leg of our journey, covering our time at Corflu, as Anne's the one with all of the fanzine experience. While she has thrown herself into 'zine work, including editorial duties on the Hugo-winner *Emerald City*, contributions to *MidFanZine* and helming the sadly-delayed *Wellspring* (with a possible name-change to come), and was greatly enthused by the prospect of meeting other 'zine fans and swapping many coloured / stapled / scratched-upon / printed / bound pieces of paper, ironically she's lacking a whole lot of time to write.

Meanwhile, the sum total of my prior experience with fanzines is limited to a flirtation with a derailed *Dr. Who* 'zine intended to debut at NorWesCon 1988. (The journal-that-wasn't might have fared better if any of the other contributors – not counting the editor – had better access than grainy CBC broadcasts received only on clear-weather days from Vancouver BC, some six hours' drive north of where we were in Seattle. By that point, I had seen two Tom Baker episodes and one with Patrick Troughton, and had read four *Dr. Who* books.) I'm certain my never-was article was going to be brilliant, or at least as solid and capable as anything could be when written by a precocious and clueless 13-year old.

[Finally, Anne's commentary upon my report, delivered and interjected from behind my right shoulder as I read my words aloud to her while she fed Rosie, shall be noted in this fashion. I make no promise as to the veracity of the actual phrasing of her commentary, as I'm the one at the keyboard. Muahaha, I say, muahahahahahaha.] As Anne already mentioned in the introduction, the Winter of our Discontent started out tremendously well, passed through a hectic January and then through the Month That Shall Not Be Mentioned Again, and on into a Mixed March. We did manage to purchase our tickets during tMTSNBMA, and with amusing scheduling, we departed on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day!

(My first aside – as you may have already noticed, I use them quite frequently [including serially nested asides... I really do think this way, and sometimes speak this way... it drives my coworkers nuts, and it's a wonderful way to torture my students] and with great glee – consists of highlighting one of our first Apparent Cultural Differences, as the USA and the UK are but two nations separated by a common language. St. Patty's Day, in honour of the Irish saint who violently expunged the serpents from Erin, is a far bigger Thing in the USA than just about anywhere else in the world. It provides sundry municipalities with the perfect excuse to saturate local water ways with non-toxic neon-green

dyes, the date grants numerous barkeeps license to treat their local beer supplies in much the same way, and the festivities grant import companies the right to print their own money as the US' stocks of Guinness Stout and Irish whiskey are thirstily assaulted in honour of a Catholic saint from across the ocean by hundreds of thousands of Americans claiming the wee-est dram of Irish ancestry.)

(St. Patrick's Day also explains why our departure was delayed by half an hour as a pair of twenty-something latecomers – looking tremendously Irish in blond dreadlocks and Bob Marley shirts – staggered drunkenly aboard and into the very last row. Safely ensconced, they promptly buckled themselves in and fell asleep in boozy stupor.)

(Americans.)

[Anne's main memory of this time was that she fussed over whether Brian would have enough leg-room in our crammed-against-the-back bulkhead seats, which was ameliorated by the kind offer of the Aussie woman just across the aisle to shift down and let me sit in part of the broad middle swath of seats. Crisis averted, and Brian failed to die horribly from a deep vein thrombosis.]

Back to the trip report!

Our arrival into Heathrow was singularly unheralded, given that we alit close on 7 a.m. on Thursday the 18th after an uneventful flight. With what little sleep we'd successfully managed en route, we had nary a hiccup as we navigated Terminal 5 to Customs to the Tube to Paddington, where we activated our BritRail passes (NB to fellow international tourists: the first-class ticket package is an amazing deal, good on all the various railways across the UK. [The first-class cabins varied, but they usually had separate space for our luggage, tables, and often a food-beverage service.]). Admittedly, we were in an addled state, but we adamantly decided that jet-lag would not cost us a solid day of tourism, and so brave and befuddled, we set forth, into a lovely March morning in London, several thousand miles away from all of our cares and worries. Life is so very hard sometimes, you know?

[Anne bemusedly remembers that our greatest challenge in Paddington lay not in the finding of an open ticket counter, but rather where to dispose of our trash, as all of the trash cans had been removed in order to thwart terrorists' dirty-trash bombs. Eventually, we were pointed at orange-vested workers wheeling dustbins around the station in fractal-patterned paths.]

[Also, Anne keenly points out to all international travellers that many of the public loos in London have an admission fee. In the case of the

Paddington Station lavs, 35 pence, with no change given. Further, Anne is pondering writing a whole fannish essay comparing American and British bathroom technology. Stay tuned.]

(I don't know if you're like me, but I find that states of altered consciousness [such as sleep-deprivation, in this example] provoke in me the ability to come up with [at the time] tremendously interesting streams of thought. As we Tubed to Paddington and then toured back and forth across the Thames on the open top of a double-decker bus, I catalogued things like fashion [indeed, Londoners' preference for extremely pointy shoes in professional dress was simply fascinating] and architecture, and I ran active mental commentary comparing US/UK differences. An interesting contrast: CCTV cameras are omnipresent in London, and yet I observed a far greater freedom of expression and variety in personal appearance. Also, many very modern American cities aspire to London's level of nifty-funky-cool, but, lacking at least an extra thousand years of historical maturity, most of those American cities are wan imitators.)

When our brains and our bodies could sight-see no more without threat of implosion, we strolled back to Paddington, caught a tight connection in Reading, and triumphantly arrived near the top of the hill in Winchester. The Corflu mailing provided us with a map, but no sense of the geography of the place. In fact, all that we knew of Winchester at that point was that it was possessed of a cathedral (one that came highly recommended by one of our train conductors [and never disregard the advice of courteous and interested professional travellers. Right, James?]) and that the town was shortly to be blessed by a visiting group of enthusiastic hobbyists.

On the whole, we couldn't care less, as we were mostly brain-dead at that point.

We trundled the entire three blocks to the hotel on foot, checked in, and with our last, lingering erg of brain-power left between the two of us, got to our room and fell headlong onto our bed. I think I might have successfully kicked my shoes off somewhere in my sleep (I certainly don't remember taking them off beforehand).

After time immemorial we roused from our slumber like terrible giants, vast hungers stirring in our bellies. Well, alright, maybe we were asleep an hour, hour and a half tops. But hungry we were, and so we made our way back to the hotel lobby and sought out fellow Corfluvians with which to slake our monstrous appetites.

Err, umm, right. I mean that in the lobby, we encountered several fellow fans (Steve Green, Graham Charnock), and shortly set forth with

Jim Caughran and Janet Carrington into the drizzly Winchester evening and shared a lovely meal at the local Loch Fyne (Americans: think a very classy and well-done Red Lobster in half-timber decor). Well-fed, well-entertained, feeling quite welcomed, and with our dinner companions hearty and wholly un-gnawed-upon, we came back to the hotel and fell back abed.

[Anne says that we found said fans primarily in The Bar, once Anne recognized Steve Green, whom she'd met at the Montreal Worldcon on his Westbound TAFF trip. Mr. Green returned the salutation and promptly handed over 100 pounds from the UK TAFF fund as a gift for us to spend however we pleased. He then introduced us to Claire Brialey, who had sent us helpful email prior to the trip, but whom we'd not met. Also, Brian's memory is an abysmal failure, as Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz were the duo who introduced us to their fellow Canadian fen Jim and Janet and suggested the four of us go out hunting for dinner.]

The next morning, Friday the 19th, having slept through the hotel breakfast and lacking a con to attend until that evening, we strolled back into Winchester with an eye for good food and interesting sites (and sights). The con map sufficed admirably, the food list favored lunch and dinner establishments, and we felt vibrantly alive, even in the face of looming clouds and threatened gales. (Sleeping 12 out of 14 hours can do that to you, I've heard.) In a town the size and age of Winchester, it is nigh-impossible *not* to find yourself on the High Street if you're just wandering about. We settled in to a pasty shop on, gee, the High Street, and engaged in a favorite activity: people-watching. (NB: Small children are in fact the same, the world over. They run after pigeons, they run away from their parents, they run around each other, they stomp in puddles, and generally have a grand old time by themselves.) [And, as Anne reminds me, there were *plenty* of puddles, as it rained on and off every day of our visit to the south of England, save Sunday the 21st.] Breakfasted, we made our way back across Winchester through an open-air market and eventually past the fens along the River Itchen.

Oh, wait, weren't we supposed to be attending a convention somewhere around these parts?

Sapphire Correction Fluid? Something like that? Right.

Anne loitered meaningfully in the lobby, officially "getting our con badges and packets" (but I think she was actually... *gasp*... socializing) and I started on the eternal process of catching up on my notes. We emerged for a scheduled walking tour of medieval Winchester, handled magnificently by the self-effacing and apologetic classicist/pre-historian

Tony Keen. While the dozen of us following Tony up and down and all over Winchester hardly minded the asides about the Roman-era town, Mother Nature clearly didn't agree: for the first half hour of the tour, every time Tony opened his mouth, it rained noticeably harder. Tony bore the amusing downpours with good grace... up until the point we walked the races along the River Itchen. While the Roman-cut channel looked to be in great shape, Tony kept checking that the swollen Itchen was not about to flood the lowlands and sweep the peregrinating con-goers away. (Although we could not be certain... was Tony responsibly worried, or hopeful?)

[Anne says that, due possibly to the weather, our group grew noticeably smaller as the tour went on. However, those of us who bravely soldiered on were eventually led up to the Great Hall of the Winchester Castle, where there hangs "King Arthur's Round Table" and can also be found a lovely and impressive sculpture of Queen Victoria. Also, as we found when we returned on sunny Sunday, there was a lovely garden on the far side of the Castle hall.]

Upon our return, Anne and I sacked out for another dead-to-the-world nap. (Good beds at the Winchester Hotel. Even better sound-proofing!) Rising once again in a sufficient approximation of a pair of ambulatory intelligences, we made it to Opening Ceremonies, a grave and stately affair conducted with the most serious of countenances. I cannot say as I have ever seen a more dignified and genteel wearing of a beanie than by Mmse. Sandra Bond.

With the important work of choosing a Guest of Honour completed (all due congratulations to Mme. Mary Kay Kare, randomly selected with utmost care from a list of attendees dumped in the bottom of one of those very stately hats), the con began in earnest, demonstrated by almost everyone decamping to The Bar to partake in the special con ale (a kindred spirit to which we would find at EasterCon in two weeks). Anne and the 3rd TAFFling joined the crowd to mingle, while I, in my drink-in-hand mufti, watched James Bacon channel the ghost of Bob Shaw in a Serious Scientific Talk about the rather fishy Bermondsey Mystery Triangle. (For the uninitiated Americans: the Real Bob Shaw was an Irish fan/writer, a frequent attendee of many British conventions, and if James's tribute was any indication, possessed of an eye-searing and punishing wit.) The con's opening program closed out with a rousing session of The Explicators, consisting of a panel of four fannish experts (I use "expert" in the *broadest* of senses) tasked to provide salient answers to the following questions:

1) How would an aquatic race build a railway? (Which, of course, elicited the immediate response from the hecklers, AKA the whole damn

audience, of "*Why*?")

2) How should one edit a post-modern fanzine? (I recall that Tony Keen, the winner of this round, made a brilliant case entirely in politik-speech from Orwell's *1984*.)

3) How would one run a convention in the absence of alcohol? (The audience's immediate response was to rush out in fear, top up at the bar, and let the answering begin on the return.)

We rose on Saturday in time sufficient to attend the hotel breakfast, and I broadened my culinary horizons by sampling two of the Great British Breakfast Foods: baked beans and grilled tomatoes.

I found myself overcome with transcendental gustatory delight, and in a state of rapture I repaired back to bed.

Meanwhile, Anne caught Bill Burns's (he of efanzines.com fame and glory) interview of Earl Kemp, and I re-emerged to catch Anne on the "Grumpy Young Women" panel-cum-gripe-session, which was neither grumpy (barring Mary Kay Kare) nor chronologically young (barring Anne [no offense intended to the other very game Dames of fandom... see below...]). While Anne bravely tried to get her grump on, or to at least cover more serious fare, she found many of the recent issues of note and import to American fans barely registered on UK fans' radars. RaceFail failed to catch any interest, and even serious discussion of sexism, the ostensible point of the panel, gained little traction. The most common topic, ageism, triggered an off-hand discussion about both forms: "established" fans' disdain for the passions of the youngest generation of fans; and the young coterie's disregard for the efforts and tribulations of their elders in establishing spaces for fannish activities. [Anne notes that while we and a scarce few others were in the sharply defined in-utero-to-age-40 bracket of active, participating Corflu attendees, our two college-age members, Ang Rosin (previous GUFF winner) and John Coxon (TAFF 2011 candidate) were the most active in keeping the #Corflu tag alive and well on Twitter. As it turned out, neither of them was actually in attendance at this panel. The Grumpy Young Women panel did at least succeed in spawning a later discussion of feminism in fandom when Christina Lake and Caroline Mullan found Anne in The Bar and wanted to talk about how fandom did not initially welcome femfans when they first became active, thus leading to a womens-only publishing circle.]

After that was a team trivia contest. Future contestants in sci-fi fandom pub-trivia contests take note: having three fanzine aficionados and a Hugo Award winner in your crew you does NOT necessarily constitute a savagely competitive monstrosity of sfnal trivia knowledge. Alison Scott

and Mary Kay Kare comprised the other two members of “Alison and the Damn Yankees” and to call our competitive efforts middling would be to insult the mediocre everywhere.

But! Once the four of us could lay hands upon the artefactual material of fandom itself, we excelled! We shilled for the Corflu Fan Fund auction, handling the ephemera and trivia of many years of fanzines and sfnal fandom. [Anne notes that Corflu had arranged for a live video feed and attached chat program online, and that while there was an approximately 15 second time lag on the feed, spectators from around the globe chipped in with commentary. During the auction this activity picked up significantly, with much snarkiness and suggestions from distant points, especially when Brian manned the chat program for half an hour. At one point, Geri Sullivan, realizing that Brian was at the keyboard, directed him to bid on something for Anne and he to enjoy, later.]

After the auction, Anne attended the fannish history panel, taking advantage of the opportunity to promote awareness of the Science Fiction Oral History Association (of which Anne is a past president) and encourage fans to record interviews with con GOHs and fellow fans. She was also pleased to finally meet Ted White in person, whom she’d known for years through the Timebinders fanhistory email list. Then we went off to a pleasant dinner with much of the Plokta Cabal (Flick and Mike Scott, Steve Davies, Giulia De Cesare, and Sue Mason). Back at the con, we mingled further, taking care to catch prior TAFFlings up against the bar or wedged uncomfortably into corners where they couldn’t escape, all in the name of “conversation.”

As you may have noticed in the report to date, I make specific mention of the non-mythical but yet-nebulous location “The Bar” with some frequency and import. I admit, I was gathering a significant pile of evidence to advance a new hypothesis: that most English conventioneering takes place... (*drum roll please*) in The Bar. Yes, a shocking and ground-breaking advance in the philosophy of modern fandom, I know. I cannot truly take credit for it, as there is evidence that this trend has been observed by BritFandom before, but simply not widely reported. Luckily, I had EasterCon Odyssey ahead of me during which to gather more data.

[Anne notes that this information is, in fact, recorded deep in the arcane vaults of SMOFdom, as this significantly affects how con-runners negotiate with the hosting hotels. At British conventions, attendees may carry their drinks into con panels, as they were purchased exclusively at the hotel bar at a negotiated price and not provided by the con-supplied con-suite. Sneaky SMOFs.]

For our last morning in Winchester, we had thought ahead and ordered breakfast for our room, and I decided to go Full Traditional and ordered the smoked kipper.

In retrospect, I have to say... *meh*?

Have no fear, future instalments of our TAFF report chronicle a far more spectacular response to novel British breakfast foods yet to come!

Up earlier than ever (on this trip), Anne & I partook in a beautiful morning to scurry back to the Winchester Cathedral, ostensibly to make our donations and go inside and play tourist. We also had plans to take in the Anglican Passiontide Sunday services, with the Sung Eucharist, although we are not church-goers: the chance to listen to medieval choral music performed in the setting for which it was written, an arched Norman gothic cathedral of stone and stained glass, is not an opportunity to be passed up lightly. It was exhilarating. I found my gaze and thoughts constantly tracking upwards during the performance, as if trying to trace the songs back to a more celestial source, and I reflected that I could only imagine what thoughts were triggered centuries ago, when minds less cluttered with modern effluvia and rational thought first heard these sounds in the elegantly vaulted space of the Winchester Cathedral. That morning's performance was an awe-inspiring and eye-opening experience.

[Anne recalls a story from Tony's tour, about the majestic Cathedral's roots. At the start of the 20th century, experts were called in to shore up the foundations, as the building was settling unexpectedly. After digging in the foundations for a while, they discovered the Cathedral was not built on bedrock, but rather a giant raft, floating in a swamp. (Insert Monty Python references here.) On Sunday morning we found the bronze bust in tribute of the deep-sea diver they had hired to reseat the foundation and save the Cathedral. In cold swamp-water. In the dark, underneath thousands of tons of stone. Alone.]

However, transported as we were, we just missed the Corflu group photo-shoot (the second-most important item on the Sunday program). As many of the fans were still foolishly assembled in a single, vulnerable location, Anne scurried around to gather all of the physically present TAFFlings for a TAFF-only photo. She herded more past-and-present TAFFlings into any one photo than had previously ever been either attempted or achieved: 15!

At the con-closing lunch buffet, our GoH gave a well-received speech, the FAAn awards were sorted out, and kudos were delivered to the various concom staff for an enjoyable and successful Corflu. A highlight of the ceremony was James Bacon successfully channeling another notable

and absent fandom personality, Mr. Manic Enthusiasm himself, Chris Garcia, as James presented Chris's bid for hosting the next Corflu in balmy Sunnyvale, California. (In the face of no competition whatsoever, E Corflu Vitus – info at corflu.org – won to rousingly moderate acclaim.) Anne stayed at the hotel to connive with other fans and arrange for events and hosting upon our return to London in the not-too-distant future. I took off for the Cathedral again, this time to finally take some pictures, as well as join in the throngs on the High Street enjoying their Sunday shopping.

Eventually we said our Corflu farewells and once again took to the rails, heading further west to Bournemouth/Poole, to meet up with an old college friend of Anne's, which shan't be detailed here.

[Anne adds that the Closing Ceremonies included a sweet, if embarrassing moment, when it was revealed that her childhood photo had won the "Bonniest Bairn" contest. Her prize was a framed copy of the winning photo. This she promptly gave to her college friend at our next stop, saving us from carrying a severely fragile and narcissistic tribute to and fro across Britain.]

[Furthermore, after Closing Ceremonies, Anne spent a stint chatting into the live video feed with fellow Corfluvians and TAFFlings Steve Green and James Bacon, and also John Coxon. It was at this point that Anne and James nudged John to formally declare his 2011 (westbound) TAFF candidacy. We hope to see other such fine candidates join the race as well. See taff.org.uk for more information.]

[Corflu was, as Geri Sullivan had predicted, a terrific opportunity to make connections with fans we would meet again, later on our trip. Most noticeably, we connected with Alison Scott and Stephen Cain, who would host us for three nights in their domicile Plokta Central in London along with Corfluvians Mary and Bill Burns; and also James Bacon, whose epic tour of London's used bookstores and comic shops shall be chronicled in exhausting (and exhausted) detail in a later report. Many thanks to the Corflu committee who made us feel very welcome, and also to Ian Sorensen for his kind aid as to where we were to stay once we arrived in Edinburgh (although to Ian's dismay, his generous offer for Anne to share his house and me to sleep in the yard was graciously turned down). It was greatly reassuring to have that settled before we left Winchester, as we were due in Edinburgh in four days. Many other Corfluvians also attended EasterCon, giving us some trans-Atlantic continuity by helping us feel less like strangers and more like esteemed foreign dignitaries.]

The complete collection of TAFF 2010 photos taken by Anne and me can be found online at flickr.com, but as we are currently working through

sorting and annotating the lot, the most efficient way to follow the links is to look up the TAFF Livejournal community, at community.livejournal.com/taff2010. We will update the community from time to time with the latest links or news of this report.

Argentus #10, December 2010

2014: Curt Phillips

Curt Phillips attended Loncon 3, the 2014 Worldcon in London. The rival candidates were Brad and Cindy Foster (standing jointly) and Randy Smith.

Platform

I am a fan. I guess I always have been; I think I always will be. I've collected more science fiction than I'll ever have time to read, but I keep on collecting more. I've written for and published fanzines; I'm the OE of FAPA. Have done many other fannish things in my time, both usual and unusual. But I've never travelled outside America. I'd very much to meet some of the wonderful fans in the UK and from across Europe as your TAFF delegate, and then come home to write about my adventures for you.

Please support TAFF! Vote?

Nominators: Randy Byers (US), Ulrika O'Brien (US), John Purcell (US), Claire Brialey (UK), Pat Charnock (UK).

There Was a Tear, and Some Beer, in Reading

Curt Phillips

(An abbreviated excerpt from Curt's 2014 TAFF Trip Report, forthcoming....)

Fish & Chips at a pub in Cambridge. Indian cabbies arguing animatedly in Hindi on a side street in Reading. Dropping by unannounced at a small country Fire Station, getting a full tour and being presented with their uniform shirt when they learn that I was a firefighter from America. No. 88, Gray's Inn Road, London. Punting on the Cam. The beach at Clacton-on-Sea. Shaking the hand of a 94-year old tail-gunner on an RAF Lancaster bomber in WWII and being told, "you've just shaken the hand that once shook the hand of Winston Churchill, my lad." The Worldcon.

The Fans. From across England, from across Europe, from across the world; always, the Fans.

The hard part of writing a trip report seems to lie in getting started. I went to England as the 2014 TAFF delegate in August of 2014, and after all this time my memories of that trip comprise a whirling mass of amazing and improbable wonders that still swirl through my every waking thought like a 3D kaleidoscope as big as my mind. I point at one bright spot in that whirl of memories and it opens up to replay that moment in England. *There* I am, walking through the gate at Heathrow airport and being met by two of my favorite people in Fandom, Keith Freeman and Claire Brialey. *There*, and I'm setting in a pub in Reading with Keith, Dave Langford, Martin Hoare, Uncle Johnny and Audrey, where I had my first taste of British pub ale. *There*, and I'm at the Globe theater in London watching *Anthony and Cleopatra* with two Australian friends; Clare MacDonald-Sims of Melbourne and my cousin Nick Falkner of Adelaide. *There*, and I'm watching the only two flyable WWII era RAF Lancaster bombers left in the world today fly past as I stand on the beach at Clacton-on-Sea. And *there*, and *there* and *THERE*, and I'm at Loncon 3; the 2014 World Science Fiction Convention in London. And then the kaleidoscope turns and I'm back there once again....

Reading, Berkshire – it says here in the guidebook – is the largest town in England that isn't a city. It's located 36 miles due west of central

London, has a maritime climate, and a population of roughly 156,000 people and at least 4 fans. Actually it doesn't say that last bit about the fans in the guidebook; I performed that survey all on my own. There may well be more than 4 fans in Reading – Keith did mention that there was some sort of science fiction club – but I was only there for 2 or 3 days and didn't get around to meeting everybody. It was to Reading – pronounced "red – ing" that I went after Keith Freeman picked me up at Heathrow Airport just outside London on August 9th, my first day in England. After a rather long and decidedly weird overnight flight – I'll write about the sheer ecstasy of modern airline travel elsewhere sometime soon – I staggered in moderately sleep-deprived stupor through long serpentine lines of my fellow travellers – who, curiously, all seemed to be either excitable and athletic looking young people on their way to or from some sort of sports camp, or irritated and rumpled looking business types who watched sharply for any chance to cut the line, and I eventually found myself at a Customs desk where I handed over my brand new passport to a young woman with a uniform and a badge and – I gathered – the authority to ask me many pointed questions about who I was, why I had come to England, who I was staying with, what I was going to do, and so forth. I suspect that she also had the authority to order me back on a plane and out of the country – or worse – if she found my answers lacking. When I confessed that I was there to attend a convention she perked up and asked "exactly what kind of a convention, sir?"

In an instant, somewhere in the back of my mind, the ever lurking monster of paranoia – fed by a lifetime of scorn and ridicule over my love of science fiction – awoke. I could feel the spirits of all of my high school English teachers crowding close around me in cackling glee as if to say, "we *told* you that all those crazy sci-fi stories would ruin your life!" Before those spirits could call in a legion of my friends and family for reinforcement, I drew myself up, looked that Customs agent in the eye and replied in clear and ringing tones, "I'm here to attend Loncon 3 – the 73rd World Science Fiction Convention!"

The Customs lady smiled. "Oh yes," she said as she stamped my passport. "I know about that. Have a good time, and welcome to the United Kingdom." And as easily as that I was waved towards the exit and into England. The first sight to greet me once through those doors was a fannish one. Keith Freeman – with whom I'd stay for a couple of days, and a surprise greeter; Claire Brialey, who had taken a break from her job in central London and come out to greet the arriving TAFF delegate.

I must pause here and discuss Claire and her monumental efforts both

before, during, and after my two weeks in England to make certain that I prepared properly, arrived safely, was constantly under the supervision of qualified fans who wouldn't let me wander off and get run over by the number 6 bus from Basingstoke (a possibility which I believe Claire had evaluated and had correctly concluded was small, but impossible to dismiss outright); that I'd always have a ready supply of food, shelter, transport, and fanzines; that I'd get to see as much as possible of what I wanted to see and do in England and meet as many of the fans whom I'd long wanted to meet in England; and that above all else I'd have the best TAFF trip to England that I possibly could. It was wonderful! You see, those who know Claire Brialey best know that one of her many superpowers is her superior ability to plan things. To plan just about anything at all, evidently. Claire had been one of my TAFF nominators and as such she evidently felt some responsibility to make sure that my trip got off to a good start. One example among many: Immediately upon greeting me at the airport, Claire handed me a TAFF goodie bag which she'd put together for me. It contained:

- An umbrella
- A pre-paid cell phone with charger
- An Oyster card (which is a pass to travel on the trains and busses of London) with a very generous prepayment on it. It even came in a Loncon 3 Oyster card holder
- *Banana Wings* 56
- Loncon 3 Progress Reports #1, #2, and #3
- A Loncon 3 mousepad
- An Intersection (the previous UK Worldcon in 2005) DVD with fanhistorical photos and other stuff
- A "London A-Z" book of city maps and other London travel guides
- Two boxes of OXO cubes for my British mother-in-law (because Claire knew that my M-in-L had asked me to get some for her while I was in the country
- Two packages of Flake candy bars (because Claire knew that this is the favorite candy bar of my wife Lizbeth – who is also British)

It's good to be the TAFF delegate; but it's even better to be a friend of Claire Brialey's!

After talking a bit about some plans for later in my trip, Claire went off back to work and Keith expertly stowed me and my luggage into his car for the hour long drive to Reading. Keith and Wendy – his wife – are

very good friends of Liz and myself and stayed with us the previous summer while they toured the Southeastern US. Plus they had hosted Liz and her mother a few years prior to that when those two travelled over to England without me, so we talked and caught up as old friends do. This was my first experience with British driving and I have to admit that I found Left-side-of-the-road driving decidedly unnerving. Keith made it all look so easy; as though he was completely unaware that to me it looked like the way that people would drive in Alice's Wonderland. You know, *Through the Looking Glass*? Compact British cars shot by us in the other lane continuously. I kept expecting to see Jeremy Clarkson, James May, and Richard Hammond race by us in quarter-million pound sports cars, but sadly they never did. After watching for a while I realized that although I might be able to manage to drive in England myself *if* I concentrated very hard and never let myself get distracted, sooner or later I *would* get distracted or would let my concentration lapse just for an instant, and the local Reading news would be reporting about the crazy American who wound up under a bus from trying to drive on the right hand side of the road. Happily, I never once had to try to drive anywhere during my two weeks in England thanks to all my British friends assuming – quite correctly – that I'd in all likelihood get myself killed if they let me try it. I didn't miss the experience one little bit. Instead I just gazed at the English countryside that we drove past and imagined how it all must have looked 75 years earlier in the early days of WWII. The war years are a constant preoccupation of mine and looking about me I found reminders of 1939-1945 everywhere I looked.

"Windsor Castle over there", Keith remarked, as we drove past a formidable looking fortress off to the East. And he wasn't kidding; it *was* Windsor Castle! "Do you suppose the Queen is in residence?" I asked. "I doubt it", replied Keith, apologetically, as though he'd somehow failed me by not insuring that the Queen remained at home during my visit. "She usually spends the summers in Scotland, I believe."

"That's too bad", I mused. "So she'll have to miss the Worldcon then, do you think?"

"I suppose that's so" replied Keith. "But then I don't think she's actually a Fan, really."

"What?", I shot back, astounded. "You mean she doesn't even watch *Dr. Who*?"

"Not since that Tennett fellow replaced Matt Smith, or so I've heard" he said, conspiratorially. That's when I knew that Keith was pulling my leg, but I didn't let on that I knew. I did, however, make a mental note to

repeat that comment to Matt Smith if I bumped into him at Loncon 3.

We shortly arrived in Reading, somehow bypassing the highly built-up downtown area that one sees pictures of in the Wikipedia article about Reading, and driving straight into the residential area where Keith and Wendy live at the end of a cul-de-sac. Wendy greeted me with a beaming face and a very nice lunch of ham sandwiches and Coca-Colas, a supply of which she had laid in especially for my visit after observing that I seemed to live on the stuff back home in Virginia. Very thoughtful of her. Wendy is quite adept at planning things herself and kept me very well fed, entertained and comfortable throughout my stay. It was Wendy who introduced me to a British tv series I'd never heard of before called *Mrs. Brown's Boys*, which turned out to be a hilarious domestic comedy that I doubt we'll ever see broadcast in America due to, well... er, you might want to go to YouTube and search on that title to find out for yourself why we'll probably never see it broadcast in America. "Thought you'd like that", remarked Wendy with a grin. After assuring Keith that no, I wasn't a bit tired, he and I went out to walk to a fish & chips shop that Keith favored to fetch the evening meal, and along the way we stopped in at a few of the small grocery stores and thrift shops nearby. Those small grocery stores – which the British just refer to as "the shops" are about the size of a small gas station food shop in America but they have a much more comprehensive line of items that I suspect are to some degree tailored by the shop owners to meet the needs and wants of the local neighborhood. I popped in to one of them just to get a sense of the place and was amazed to see that you could find just about everything in there. Newspapers, magazines, fresh fruit, candies, all manner of basic foods including fresh fish and meats, household supplies of every kind. Later in the trip I visited a large grocery store called Tesco's that was much like similar stores in the US, but clearly one could get just about everything one actually needs in those smaller neighborhood shops, plus you can get to know the shop owner and make an actual connection to the neighborhood itself. It used to be that way in America, long ago – or so I'm told. But that was before my time and I never had any real idea of just how much we've lost in this country by allowing large mega-stores to drive our small shops out of business. That point struck me there in Reading that afternoon.

Knowing that hunting for used books is a passion of mine, Keith led me into a couple of nearby thrift shops, which all look very much like thrift shops in Virginia only these in Reading had cooler stuff. This first one had an interesting used book section with far more US editions than I

was expecting. In fact, throughout my trip I noticed US editions in every book shop new or used that I visited, and I don't mean just a handful. One large book shop in Cambridge turned out to have a very through stock of books that seemed to include around 20% US editions. And all the used book shops I visited had a great many US editions throughout their stock. One of my goals on this trip was to look for and buy some of the more obscure British SF that had never been published in American editions. Unfortunately I didn't see any such books – not one – until I got to London and entered the Loncon 3 Dealer's Room and Fan Lounge, but that's a story for another article. I did find one good book in that first thrift store; a very nice first edition of a Robert Bloch hardback, *The Night of the Ripper*. That was a nice book to find on either side of the Atlantic, and it only cost 49p, or about 75 to 80 cents. Doing quick pounds to dollars conversions in my head was a talent that failed me constantly in England, but then I didn't really buy very much aside from occasional meals at the convention. I wound up spending a lot of time with fans in pubs during those two weeks and buying the TAFF delegate a drink or a meal seemed to be the thing to do. I had to actually insist on stepping in to buy a group of fans a round of drinks one afternoon after they'd all taken turns buying rounds themselves. And I could – and probably will – write a whole separate article on drinking in England. You see, I don't drink, usually. Just don't like the taste of beer and never have developed the habit of drinking it in America. But in England one doesn't generally go out to a restaurant, one goes out to a pub, and pubs mean drinking. Well, I didn't have to worry about driving anywhere, so I determined to try a taste of a tall glass of beer that was placed in front of me on my second day in Reading. You know what? I rather liked it. Beer in England is a far superior thing when compared to that found in America. The taste just isn't even in the same league and I can't understand why American beer brewers can't be bothered to travel to England to learn how to do it properly. Money – no doubt – is at the heart of it.

Keith had called David Langford – the well-known fan, publisher of *Ansible*, and 1980 TAFF Delegate, Martin Hoare – technical wizard of British Fandom, John Nielsen Hall – "Uncle Johnny" to trufans in the know, who – along with Unc's wife Audrey convened at The Roebuck, a pub in Reading. David and Martin live in Reading, and Unc and Audrey drove in just to see me as they weren't planning to go to Loncon.

"Guess what I've got in my truck out there", said Martin, with a gleam in his eye. "No, I'll tell you", he said before I could guess. "I've got a Tardis", he announced in clear, ringing tones.

"Then why are you driving the truck", I asked. "Couldn't you just have arrived in the Tardis"?

"No, no", explained Martin. "It's not a *real* Tardis; it's a full sized model that I'm hauling to London for the convention opening ceremonies."

And so he did. Dave Langford and I would later have our photo taken with that very same Tardis, and it was quite a nice one too. Martin was working with and possibly in charge of the Loncon 3 Tech Crew and had stopped off to have a drink with us while hauling of load of convention stuff to London. And just after Loncon he had to load it all back up in the truck and drive it all up to Glasgow for the Eurocon the following weekend. Martin seems to be heavily involved with technical work in British conventions and I gather that he works at this professionally too. I'd hoped to meet up with him again in London but our paths rarely crossed there, and when they did Martin was on his way to solve one problem or another with the convention. But then I got the impression that Martin rather enjoys busying himself with making sure that things work well at these events.

I'd met Unc and Audrey before at the Richmond, Virginia Corflu just a few months earlier, and Unc and I hang out regularly at an on-line watering hole on Yahoo!, so we had a good time chatting about various matters of cosmic significance. This was my first time to meet Dave Langford though, and I was thoroughly impressed with everything about this legendary fan. I'd subscribed to *Ansible* – Dave's award winning news zine – many years ago when it was only published on paper, and had been reading the online version for the past several years. (You should too, and you can find it at https://news.ansible.uk/.) I'll admit that I was a little intimidated to meet him, but he immediately put me at ease by handing me a stack of booklets and fanzines "for your TAFF auctions", he explained with a smile. Dave was the TAFF delegate in 1980 and ever since has been the spiritual foundation of the fund. His TAFF website at https://taff.org.uk/ is labeled "The Trans Atlantic Fan Fund Unofficial Home", but that's the website that every TAFF administrator for many years has used as the best possible source for news and information on the fund. Everyone who has been involved with TAFF in any way, and all who will be in the future owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Dave Langford.

That morning the newspaper that Keith read mentioned that "the worst storm of the year was currently drenching all of Britain". When Keith read this at the breakfast table I glanced out the window. It looked

like a bright, clear day in Reading just then, and it stayed that way all the way to where we met Dave in the Roebuck's parking lot. Dave had just handed me that stack of fanzines I mentioned, and then said, "and here's something special for the auction" as he handed me a postcard autographed by noted writer Christopher Priest. *Just* as Dave handed that card over, a single solitary drop of rain; in fact, a particularly fat and wet drop of rain, fell from the brilliantly clear English sky, not only into Reading, not only into that car park, but right onto that card, hitting exactly on the spot where Christopher Priest had written his name in a rather vivid blue ink which, unfortunately, proved to be so soluble to water that in all likelihood, people in excessively dry and arid parts of the Earth probably use that ink to seed clouds from airplanes to make it rain. That single drop of water was absolutely the only evidence of rainfall that I encountered during my entire two week stay in England. You can still tell that it says "Christopher Priest", sort of, but one gets the impression of a Christopher Priest who was evidently undergoing a tremendously emotional experience when he signed it.

I'm still going to put it in the TAFF auction at Sasquan this summer, but I'm going to tell people that the water stain was caused by a tear from Dave Langford as he handed it to me that day in Reading, momentarily overcome by parting with such a rare sf-nal treasure. And who'll start the bidding?

Chunga #24, April 2016

2017: John Purcell

John Purcell, travelling with his wife Valerie, attended Worldcon 75 in Helsinki, Finland, 9-13 August 2017; they also visited the UK and other European countries. The rival candidates were Sarah Gulde and Alissa McKersie.

Platform

John Purcell (College Station, Texas), an active fan since 1973, discovered fandom at the tender age of 19 in Minneapolis, Minnesota via Minicon 7. Fannish karma, that. Since then he has published multiple fanzines, apazines, attended and worked on assorted conventions (most recently the LoneStarCon III fanzine lounge coordinator in 2013), finished second to John Hertz in the 2010 DUFF race, currently produces the online fanzine *Askance* (www.efanzines.com), the paper-only personalzine *Askew*, and most recently edited/published the one-shot *Shitgibbon: the Rant-thology*. John and his artist/crafter wife Valerie share passions for Steampunk, Whoviana, gawd-awful skiffy movies, grandchildren, grilling, and dark lager.

Nominated by: (NA) Jacqueline Monahan, Lloyd & Yvonne Penney, David Thayer. (Europe) Jim Mowatt, Ro Nagey.

Riding on the Metro

John Purcell

Of all the places Valerie and I visited on my extensive TAFF trip this past summer, Paris – the city in France, not Illinois – offered the biggest problems we had to face. With the possible exception of three days in Cardiff, we were almost always with friends: we stayed with the Skeltons in Stockport (twice!), the Mowatts in Cambridge, the Fishlifters in Croydon (three times!), the Jacksons in Chichester/West Sussex, the Van Toorns in Rotterdam, and then the Benninks in Balkbrug. Naturally we were surrounded by fans in Helsinki during the Worldcon, and Liam Proven was our constant companion during our three-day stay in Prague. Heck, we even met Nina Horvath at the airport in Riga, Latvia, the day after our one-day layover wait for our connecting flight over to Helsinki: she was on the same plane! There were always friends around us, it seemed. For that matter, Cardiff was not even a real problem because we spent the better part of one day at the Doctor Who Experience (to be written up for an issue of *Exhibition Hall* since Messrs. Garcia and Bacon are also big into Whoviana type stuff), so there were a good number of fans there, making that, er, experience feel like we were attending a Doctor Who Convention.

But Paris? Nope. Not a familiar soul around. Valerie and I were in the City of Lights, left to our own devices in totally unfamiliar territory. We did not know anybody there. The only people we might have been able to stay with in France were Mike and Pat Meara, but they were in England while we were in France, and John and Eve Harvey had already buggered off toward Finland by then, too. A few months earlier I had tried getting in touch with Pascal Thomas and never heard back from him. Besides, he was way the heck down in Toulouse, and our trip itinerary was rather tightly structured. As a result, we were on our own in Paris.

Getting there from London was a snap. By this time Valerie and I were veterans of the London transit system, so we had no problems getting to St. Pancras Station (which we felt compelled to call St. Pancreas) where our Eurail train would depart for Gay Purree. Stowing our gear – a large suitcase, two smaller carry-on suitcases, and two back packs – was a bit of a bother for getting it aboard, but there was plenty of storage space by our

seats. I have to admit I could easily get used to traveling Europe by train if they were all like this part of our trip. The top speed was 208 miles per hour, with an average speed of 165 mph, according to the overhead informational sign in our car, which likewise informed us how far below sea level we were – over 65 meters at its deepest point – while rocketing through the Chunnel. The train covered the 250-mile distance in less than two hours, and we arrived at Paris' Gare du Nord Station just after 10:30 p.m. local time. With the aid of Siri and Google Maps we debated between walking or taking a cab to our destination, which was only three-quarters of a mile away, but it was dark, getting late, plus we were in a strange city. The cab drivers stared at us like hungry wolves, but we didn't want to pay their ridiculous fares (we had been warned about them). So we called for an Über driver, who turned out to be a pleasant middle-aged gentleman who appreciated my wife's first year French, and his rate was very reasonable. By the time we got to our hotel nearly an hour after disembarking the train, we were definitely too tired to deal with anything more than sleeping that night.

Our plan was to spend a total of five days in Paris; six, counting travel in and out of the city. We ended up spending the first two nights in a "hotel" in the Tenth Arrondissement, officially named L'Hotel Jarry Confort, but we renamed it the Hotel Jerry Lewis not only because of the name similarity and we were in France where the late American comedian Jerry Lewis is revered, but because this establishment turned out to be a real joke. It may have been very affordable, but seriously: this joint had no air conditioning, no lift, and our fourth floor room was the size of a broom closet with the smallest bathroom we have ever seen jammed into a corner niche. The pictures on the Jarry's website were a flat-out lie: the "spaciousness" was pure photo-shopped illusion. Like Abraham Lincoln said, "Never trust what you read on the Internet." Word up, folks: carefully – and I mean *carefully* here – research any hotels you find on Bookings.com. You will not regret the effort. We already knew that most of Europe had yet to embrace the wonders of air conditioning, so we expected the lack of AC, but if we had known of no elevators or things of that nature, we never would have booked a room at this place.

After we – as in me – lugged all of our stuff up four flights of narrow, windy stairs, and figured out how in bloody hell to arrange things so that we could actually move around in this broom closet, we decided to check out our immediate environs by looking out the window. Well, that afforded a lovely view of a brick wall with a narrow alley separating the Jerry Lewis from the next building. To be perfectly honest, we really

should not have opened that window for a number of reasons. Granted, we needed to get some air flowing into the room – which, given its size, would not take long – and since it was after midnight we figured it "should" be okay, but we were quite wrong. Not only was the room hot and stuffy, but thanks to this being the hottest summer on record in Europe, so was the Parisian night-time air. No relief at all. On top of that, we were blessed with sewer smell rising up from below. Not even two hours after our arrival in Paris in late evening of July 28th, we were already quite pissed off by the time an Italian couple returned to the Jerry Lewis from a night out and started arguing quite loudly. They were one floor up and kept us awake another hour before either one of two things happened: the man apologized to his wife – if she really was his wife, as if that mattered, although the thought added another layer of intrigue to their verbal donnybrook – or they both passed out, having spent the last of their wine-fueled energy. We were grateful for the silence, and finally fell asleep ourselves after resolving to demand moving to a bigger and more accessible room.

The next morning, after grabbing coffee from the lobby café and bar, I was able to talk to the manager – who spoke English reasonably well – to voice our complaints and made the room change request. He graciously accommodated us, especially after I said we would be changing hotels if he could not make such a switch (amazing what the threat of lost income can do to get things done), and offered the large top floor room – up two more winding flights of stairs from our broom closet – at the same price. I checked it out first and found it much more to our liking, especially due to the large French doors that opened onto a narrow balcony overlooking the street, providing a nice breeze and relatively fresh air. I went back down, and brought Valerie upstairs to get her approval. Then I dragged all of our stuff up to room 605, cursing all the way, raining all sorts of ugly thoughts down on the head of the proprietor and his children's children. We eventually got the heck out of there by early-afternoon on Saturday, July 29th to finally enjoy at least some of the sights, sounds, and much more aromatic smells of Paris.

After riding the Metro from the Chateau D'eau Station near Hotel Jarry to the Madeleine Station in the city center, we spent the rest of that Saturday afternoon and evening wandering around some of the streets. That leg of the subway wasn't too bad, but we learned firsthand that riding the Metro back would be a severe memory test because you really need to pay attention to the signs pointing you in the direction you want to go. The main thing to remember when reading these Metro directional signs is that

they are labeled by the end points of each route, which you are either heading towards or away from. Sounds simple, no? No, not so simple. First things first, you have to descend through an underground lair similar to the old video game Wolfenstein. You need to go down dozens of stairwells, and in the 10th arres., it is a smelly descent into the depths of the Parisian underground rail warren. Sometimes the walls were adorned with advertisements of upcoming theater shows, concerts, or art gallery displays. Which station you were at even had better posters, such as the large images of one of Valerie's artistic idols, Salvador Dalí. Not surprisingly, the Madeleine and Concorde Metro stations in the First Arrondissement were clean and adorned with high-class wall advertisements, some of these even outfitted with neon lights, while underground musicians filled the tunnels with the sounds of guitars, violins, flutes, and harmoniums. I checked but Filthy Pierre was nowhere in sight.

But back to above ground Paris, with its incredible architecture, history, and art. Everywhere we turned was a visual treat: Art Deco designs adorned building trims, cornices, balconies, and roofs; statues were strategically placed in gardens or surrounded major buildings, such as the Grand Opera; in fact, throughout Paris the architecture of all the buildings is remarkably coherent and unified. Most city center buildings date from the 1870s to the 1920s, with older and newer structures mixed in. Yes, the city center of Paris is gorgeous, and we loved it.

It would turn out that most of our time during our entire stay in Paris was spent lingering in the Jardin de Tuileries, which is a huge complex of gardens and statuary surrounded by palaces and museums, all in a massive area that could have contained three football stadiums and their parking lots. It was the perfect staging point for anywhere we wanted to go in the city. At one end of the Jardin de Tuileries is the world famous Louvre, which we were planning on seeing on Monday, July 30th, and at the opposite end is the Champs Elysees, which led off to the Arc de Triomphe, which likewise was on our must see list. Without a doubt, this is the Paris the world should know and appreciate. Needless to say, we enjoyed the rest of that Saturday immensely, returning refreshed and full of hope to the Hotel Jerry Lewis just before midnight.

Now, it needs to be stated here that the difference between the First (the city center where the Louvre and the Jardin de Tuileries are located) and Tenth Arrondissements (where the Hotel Jerry Lewis is) is literally like day and night. The First is clean, with lots of art galleries and museums, with clean airy streets lined by architectural delights, plus the

clean gardens were lovingly landscaped with flowers and sculptures, and thousands of tourists (especially giant groups of Chinese) wandered aimlessly about, and did I mention that the First Arrondissement is clean?

But we were not staying in that area. Nope. Our garret room was back in the Tenth, so after a day of earthly delights, we returned with our spirits lifted and full of hope for a better night's sleep.

Well, Saturday night at the Jerry Lewis Hotel *was* an improvement over the previous night, but not by much. During the day the management failed to instal air conditioning or a proper lift, plus late night was even noisier. The reason for this was that even though the rancid sewer smell was gone, now we were in a bigger room facing the street; to get fresh air in, the windows opened out street-ward, which meant this time we were kept awake by loud, drunken or stoned young Parisians prowling the sidewalks well into the wee hours. It actually sounded like a gaggle of gurgling grungy punks had gathered directly in front of the Hotel Jerry Lewis. We Were Not Pleased.

Two nights of this was more than enough. So we spent that very late Saturday night/very early Sunday morning researching on our cell phones, despite the weak free WiFi link the Hotel Jerry Lewis provided, for a better Parisian hotel, preferably in a nicer part of the city. After a couple hours of searching Booking.com – well, we got a three-bar signal for that, so you work with what you have – and reading through the websites of a bunch of hotels, we found one of note that was right down in the First Arrondissement, Hôtel Opéra Richepanse. It was a posh 4-star hotel that had everything we desired: air conditioning, an elevator (sorry: a lift), a spacious room (almost 800 square feet, making it half the size of our house in Texas), a king-sized bed, in-room coffee service and bar, a 50-inch HD television, a huge bathroom with shower and tons of clean, fresh towels, there was a first floor restaurant with full buffet breakfast included in the price of the room, etc. And the really, really awesome selling point about the Richepanse was its location: we could walk to the Louvre, the Jardin de Tuileries, the Arc de Triomphe, a slew of museums, plus two nice Metro stations – the Madeleine and Concorde – were all mere blocks away from the Richepanse, providing access to even more museums and sights, including the grand dame of Paris, the Eiffel Tower.

This hotel room was pricey – a few hundred dollars a night – but we had our personal credit card, so Valerie and I looked at each other, sighed, and said, "Fuck it. We deserve to treat ourselves right. After all, when are we ever going to see Paris again in our lifetimes? We've got the available credit, let's do it." So we reserved our new room and checked out of the

Jerry Lewis early Sunday afternoon, and once again dragged all of our luggage off to the Chateau D'eau Metro station to find civilization at the Rich Pants hotel. (Yes, we re-named that place, too. With a name like Richepanse, it would have been rude to not rename the hotel.)

However, the problem was it was almost 5 p.m. by the time we attempted to board the Metro, and apparently it did not matter that it was Sunday. Every single #4 subway train car heading toward our destination was packed. I swear, it seemed half the population of Paris was streaming to city center. After four full trains had rattled through, we decided that for the next #4, the first car that stopped nearest to us with any kind of room that could accommodate the two of us and our gear, we would jam our way on.

Sure enough, five minutes later another #4 Metro rolled into Chateau D'eau Station, and lo and behold, a pair of doors opened directly in front of us, disgorging enough passengers to create room for the luggage encumbered Purcells. We quickly grabbed our stuff and leaped aboard. People standing inside drew back to give us some extra room if they could, which was greatly appreciated, but as Valerie and I jostled into position my back was slammed by one of the train doors as they began to close! I tumbled forward, smashing my right shin into our biggest suitcase, while the train doors bounced back a couple feet, then tried to eat me again when I attempted to stand up. Down I went a second time. Some passengers tried pushing the doors apart with minimal results, but just enough to extricate myself from the death-dealing mandibles of the train doors so that they could close properly. Who would have thought a French Metro train would try to eat a respectable American TAFF delegate? How rude!

I struggled back to my feet. "Are you alright?" Valerie cried out, yanking her suitcase and bag protectively to her side.

"I think so," I shakily replied, restacking the two suitcases in front of me, and readjusted my backpack. "Whew!" I whewed, looked at my wife and gave her a goofy smile. "That almost made me homesick for the New York City subway." A couple people chuckled at that, but most of the other passengers who had witnessed this literal subway attack stared blankly. *Saracens*, I thought. *Bloody unfeeling Saracens!* The only good thing about this was that we were getting off two stations down the line, at Madeleine. Once there, it was much easier getting off – the doors stayed open a lot longer here (better clientele in the First Arres.? Metro paid their electric bills here?) – so we disembarked, rearranged everything yet again, and began the long trek up stairway after stairway, ascending towards the light. "Son of a bitch!" I bitched. "Don't they believe in elevators in

Europe? Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, but this is ridiculous!" Valerie toiled on wordlessly, concentrating on not passing out. It took us over twenty minutes, counting rest breaks, to climb this subterranean Mount Calgary, burdened by our Samsonite crosses. Our legs felt the strain, and my right shin began to ache.

Finally we emerged into sunshine and fresh air. Valerie and I plopped down onto a bench, grateful for surviving the ordeal. Unfortunately, we still had to walk to the Rich Pants Hotel, but a quick check on our cellphone directional apps showed that we were only – *only!* – two and a half short blocks away. By now my right shin was quite sore. Rolling up that pants leg revealed a really nice bruise forming. Gingerly touching it, I breathed a sigh of relief that nothing felt broken or chipped. Just a nice purplish-red memento that would last for a week or so.

"We can do this," I said, unrolling my jeans to cover and protect my wounded leg.

"Fucking hell," Valerie panted, her eyes closed. "Give me another ten minutes at least."

"Not a problem."

I glanced at my watch. It was a few minutes after six in the evening. If we took it easy we'd still be checking into our new hotel Real Soon Now. So while catching our breath, letting our heartbeats return to normal, Valerie and I looked around and marveled at the architecture surrounding us. We were in a prime shopping and dining district, which immediately put us in a better mood. Delicious tendrils of dinner wafted from the Fauchon Paris restaurant three doors down and lovingly embraced us. Poshly dressed Parisians window-shopped, posed dramatically for Valerie taking photos on her new iPhone 7+. A few dozen pictures later, we soldiered on, my leg feeling a bit better as we leisurely strolled down Place de la Madeleine, veered right onto Rue Dupont, then right again on Rue Saint-Florentin, arriving in short order at the automatically opening double doors of Hôtel Opéra Richepanse.

Walking into the lobby was like stepping into the heyday of 1920s opulence. The lobby was pure Art Deco, with potted plants accenting the black marble tiled floor, which contrasted perfectly with the pale ivory coloured walls lined with luxurious couches and comfy chairs; an elegant but simple mahogany coffee table aesthetically centered one section of the spacious lobby. Off on a broad window ledge was a pitcher of fresh lemon water on a tray, neatly stacked clean crystal glasses next to it. I half expected F. Scott Fitzgerald to be sitting in the lobby on one of the divans, nodding to us over his newspaper, welcoming us with a smile.

We approached the light mahogany accented front desk, which looked like it had just been flawlessly polished. When the lovely, young receptionist said in the sweetest French accent, “Bon jour! May I help you?” it was all we could do to not cry from joy. All of our trials and pain had brought us to this posh island of peace.

Oh, heck yeah! This was more like it. Now we could *really* enjoy Paris!

Vibrator #46, November 2017

2020: Michael Lowrey

Michael “Orange Mike” Lowrey would have attended Concentric, the 2020 UK Eastercon, to be held in the Birmingham NEC hotel, 10-13 April 2020; like so many other events in the pandemic era this had to be cancelled. Michael’s TAFF trip was delayed to 2022 and Reclamation, the 2022 UK Eastercon at London Heathrow; he also visited Luxembourg for LuxCon (the 2022 Eurocon) and met fans in Denmark, Poland and Sweden. The rival TAFF candidate was Ann Totusek.

Michael’s report-in-progress has the overall title *A Visible Fan Abroad: A TAFF Journal of the Plague Years*.

Platform

My first convention (1975) was the best thing that ever happened to me. I have loved, married and parented within the tribe. I’ve been active: fanzines and apas, the N3F, mailing lists, Usenet, social media. I’ve pubbed my ish, and been officer of a local SF club.

I am a Fan, free citizen of the ImagiNation. Whatever else I may be – husband, daddy, union leader, Esperantist, wearer of orange garments, Quaker, feminist, Irishman, Mac user, Wobbly, Hordesman, Wikipedian – this is my Way of Life. My cunning plan remains: to meet fans all over Over There, as many places as possible. FIAWOL!

Nominated by: (NA) James Nicoll, Steven H Silver, Curt Phillips; (Europe) Rob Hansen, John-Henri Holmberg.

Chapter the First: The Trip That Never Was

Michael Lowrey

> *It was about the Beginning of January 2020, that I, among the Rest of my Neighbours, heard in ordinary Discourse that a new Plague was come from the East, for it had been very violent there. It matter'd not, from whence it come; but all agreed, it was come into Europe. [apologies to Daniel Defoe]*

I didn't pay much attention. I was watching the election for the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, whose results were announced about the same time. This was my third nomination, and this year, huzzah! I was the winner. The complications and politics, including the thunderous editorials by a good friend (Nic Farey) telling people not to vote for me? Those belong in a history of TAFF, not in what is after all a trip report.

That January, I wrote:

> Ideally, after leaving Stockholm on 22 or 23 March, I'd like to get over to Finland, then proceed south and west through the Baltics, Poland, maybe the Czech Republic or even Hungary?, Germany, the Netherlands, ideally France, then up to England, over to Wales, across briefly to Ireland, then double back to England, to London, then north through English fandom to Scotland (at least the Lowlands, whence the Lowreys/Lauries/Lowerys came; and Edinburgh) and back south, arriving in Birmingham for Eastercon 9 or 10 April.
>
> Ambitious? Hell, yeah.
>
> I warmly remember 1990, when there were busloads of Finns and carloads of Poles at ConFiction; I'd love to have contact with folks like that, make this a truly European visit and not just the British Isles. I don't have names or addresses for any of these places, though, and would be pathetically grateful for any aid you and other Eurofen can provide. (Perhaps some of the folks currently registering for ConFiction?) One of Langford's few failings is that his Ansible con and meeting lists mostly seem to stop east of the English Channel. If there are no fannish

contacts to be made, obviously the Finland and Eastern Europe leg could be omitted, instead going through Denmark to Germany. And if there were invites from Italia or Portugal: hey, I'm eager to be flexible. There's no place I want to avoid outside of Putin's Russia and Russian-occupied Ukraine.

I do want to emphasize: I am a union activist and former student radical; I have no problem with staying in hostels, or sleeping on couches, futons, air mattresses, or piles of donated clothing heaped in church basements [real-life example]. I'm a cheap date (teetotaler, too; so cheap for drink-buying) and not a picky eater (just enthusiastic). I have no problem with traveling by means of buses, trains, trolleys, ferries, hovercraft [not full of eels], car rides from fen I just met, etc. My only first-world need is WiFi, as frequently and cheaply as practicable.

Alas, I am only fluent in English and somewhat in rusty Esperanto; I can stumble through a menu in Spanish, or insult idiots in limited and somewhat archaic Deutsch. I have no Svensk, Suomi, Latviesu Valoda, Magyar, Lëtzebuergesch, etc. I'm also horrible with faces and names; fair warning.

I want to emphasize, my ultimate itinerary will be determined by where fans want to have me visit, not by where I would like to be a tourist. I just want to get away from the "ambassador from Anglophone North America to Anglophone Europe" syndrome.

By late February, I had a schedule in place. With the help of such stellar folks as Johan & Linnéa Anglemark, Marcin "Alqua" Kłak, Jukka Halme, Tomas Cronholm, Pilar Fernández, and Blanca Rodríguez, from mid-March, when I would begin with the Swedish national convention Fantastika 2020, I was struggling to make arrangements to visit as much of Eurofandom as practicable, from Sweden onward, ending my Grand Tour at Concentric. As late as March 9, details were being finalized for a sofa in Barcelona on which I could rest my head. Tickets were being bought and my itinerary finalized; Py had even created and ordered limited-edition enameled pins as guest gifts for those who would host me.

Not all my ambitions were realized, but I was set up to land in Sweden for Swecon, go on to Turku and Helsinki to meet with Finnish fans, then do a run through Warsaw, Katowice and Krakow meeting various Poles along the way, followed by a hop over to Madrid, then Barcelona for visits with Spanish fandom, then to London. I was to hit Gatwick at 8:20 on the morning of the 3rd of April, and had no idea what

would be doing from there until the Thursday before Eastercon in Birmingham on Easter weekend (10-13 April). I had to return to the States after that, but I was pleased by what I had been able to do.

And then it all fell apart. On March 11, one of my Spanish contacts told me the country was being closed off. By March 12, I announced, under the header "Shredded Orange TAFFeta: A Journal of the Plague Year":

> As the 2020 TAFF delegate, I was booked to begin next week with Fantastika 2020, the Swecon (Swedish national SF/F convention), then going on to Turku and Helsinki in Finland; Warsaw, Katowice and Krakow in Poland, and Madrid and Barcelona, before carrying on to London, parts unknown in the UK, and eventually Birmingham for Eastercon (the British national con). Less than 24 hours ago, I posted a defiant determination to be fandom's delegate across the Great Water.
>
> Now Fantastika has been cancelled/postponed, and Eastercon may follow. All the meetings and stayovers and gatherings in between? They may be banned, or fans may simply consider it prudent to avoid such assemblies for now.
>
> I am sorry if anybody perceived my previous attitude as one of irresponsibility; I thought of it rather as steadfast determination to fulfill the obligation I had undertaken to serve as fandom's ambassador. I had all these invites from eager fans (they felt like they were younger and more enthusiastic than the Old Fans and Tired I usually hang with) in places like Helsinki and Katowice and Barcelona, boldly seizing a chance to connect with the broader fannish world. I was looking forward to crashing on sofas in Krakow and Madrid and Turku. And now....
>
> My heart is breaking as I face the probability that all this planning, all this enthusiasm, will prove to have been for naught. I am hoping that something can be salvaged from the wreckage, and in the meantime I thank all of fandom for their input, even those who criticized me most harshly.

Sure enough, every con and meeting was cancelled and travel was globally forbidden. With a few minor exceptions (a ferry and a train ride, I think), all of the tickets I'd scheduled were cancelled without refund, costing TAFF more money than I care to think about, even two years later. Everyone rushed to insist that I remained the 2020 delegate, whenever I would travel (not least of all Nic); and I was assured by older, wiser hands

that TAFF would not be bankrupted even if almost every cent/euro/pound spent on tickets was to be lost (as most eventually were). But as the world learned more about COVID-19, glib hopes of a fall 2020 trip collapsed; as would, in their turns, spring and then fall of 2021.

Beam #17, October 2022

2023: Sandra Bond

Since the 2023 Worldcon was in China, Sandra travelled instead to the North American Science Fiction Convention (NASFiC): Pemmi-con in Winnipeg, Canada, 20-23 July 2023. She also travelled extensively within the USA. The rival TAFF candidate was Mikołaj Kowalewski.

Sandra Bond's report-in-progress has the overall title *Her Beautiful Mistake*.

Platform

I tripped over fandom at the age of seventeen, and immediately fell in love with it, in that blundering and overblown way in which teenagers tend to conduct romance.

In the thirty-five years since then, I've partaken in pretty much every branch and every subdivision which fandom has to offer, and the one constant about it all is that I'm still in love with it.

If I win it, I shall look after TAFF with love.

My fan career's been far too long
For just one paragraph,
So all I'm going to say is this –
Vote Sandra Bond for TAFF.

Nominated by: (Europe) Claire Brialey, Caroline Mullan, Alison Scott. (NA) John D. Berry, Ted White.

Chapter 5: Pemmi-Con, Winnipeg, 19-23 July 2023

Sandra Bond

Day thirteen of TAFF, unlucky for some. Sandra Bond – already befuddled by her travels and overwhelmed by the generosity of North American fans – has left Minneapolis and has hitched a lift with Minnesota fans Curt Gibson and Alice Ableman in Curt's mom's SUV, riding north for NASFiC.

No, you haven't missed any previous instalments; they will be published elsewhere, in due course, and eventually a complete version will follow. I'm starting with this chapter, partly because Geri is publishing it and chapter 1 will largely be about her as my first host, and partly in order to air some issues arising from Pemmi-Con while the iron, so to speak, is hot.

[19 July]

More storm clouds were gathering as Curt, Alice and I gunned it north along the Canadian highway. I wasn't bothered. I didn't have to do any more driving (insurance wouldn't cover me north of the border); all I needed to do was to sit in the back, enjoy the relief of having made it through the border crossing, and revel in being on a Manitoban road.

Not that the road or its environs were so very different to their counterparts in North Dakota. The road number had changed, and we were now on Highway 75; but even that was barely different, since before the US built Interstate 29 up to the border, the road that north led to the border crossing at Pembina was US-75.

We progressed north, past a string of little towns all of which seemed to be named Saint Something. ("What next? Saint Elsewhere?"), and then the rain hit just as we arrived in road works. It came down forcibly, as though the raindrops were made of lead rather than water, and road conditions soon became so bad that I stopped looking forward to the con and started worrying whether we'd even make it there. But Curt had a safe pair of hands on the wheel and as we approached Winnipeg's southern precincts the rain died away.

Over the Assiniboine river, a left turn, and we were there, at the Delta

Hotel. Curt managed to cram the SUV into the bay at the front (which confusingly served for both taxis and drop-offs), and we set to unloading my cases. Curt and Alice were staying elsewhere that night, having only belatedly decided to come up on the Wednesday and found the hotel full; they would transfer to the con hotel on Thursday.

I checked in, where I heard the welcome words “Ah, your bill has already been taken care of.” Waving goodbye to my good samaritans with promises to see them during the con, I took stock.

No luggage trolleys were to be seen. The lobby was cram-jam with fans, many of them clutching large musical instrument cases; later I was to find that filk was one of the few subcultures of fandom who were well catered for by the convention (The “programme” tab on the con website gave a drop-down menu with just two items; “filk musicians” and “filk music concerts”.) Every now and again a trolley came back empty and was seized upon. I started to wonder if I’d get my copious luggage up to my room by the end of the con.

A familiar and welcome face hove into view; Murray Moore.

I’d been worrying about my attendance at the early welcome dinner. The con website had a link to a Google document which invited you to complete your menu choices, but by the time I was certain I’d be arriving in time for it, the document was no longer accepting inputs. I’d emailed the convention hopefully, but received no reply. Murray didn’t know anything about it – why should he? – but he did know that people were gathering in the lobby at 1830, less than two hours away.

At this point an empty trolley came past, and I seized it in a grip of steel, letting Murray escape.

My room was on the fourth floor, and though it wasn’t a suite, I’d seen hotel suites that took up less space in total. Indeed, whether by accident or design, I’d been placed right next to the con suite, which had an identical size and layout. I eyed my bed longingly, but nobly took the trolley back down before permitting myself to slump for a too-brief rest.

Venturing forth again after a little zizz, I found Karen Schaffer and Michael Ward, who pointed me at the committee member in charge of the dinner. She didn’t have her list, but she knew I was on it, and I finally crossed it off my list of worries where it had been sitting for several days. I also took the opportunity to divest myself of the baggie full of 1973 US cents which I’d picked up in Minneapolis... or so I thought; the baggie was not quite as full as I thought when I passed it over, and I kept finding more pennies at the bottom of my handbag for the entire remainder of my trip.

At the appointed time I hooked back up with Murray Moore, plus

Garth Spencer and a cluster of other fans, and we set off on foot for the Old Spaghetti Factory. Despite this being 2023 and us all having mapping technology on our phones, we inevitably got lost.

We knew the restaurant was at The Forks; we knew The Forks was on the river. We even knew the river was to the south of us, and had a River Trail along the bank which would lead us to the watering hole. What we didn't know was how to find the south, or the river. Eventually we found a cab driver whose taxi was sitting morosely with its hood raised, and he directed us along what would have been a pleasant walk if we had been less tired and in less of a hurry to catch up with the sensible people who had taken cabs there.

Finally we made it. Half the dining room was replete with sensitive fannish faces, some of which in turn were already replete with pasta. But we were in time to order. Reminding myself that I was on TAFF to meet as many people as I could, I sat with two of the bunion-derby party who I didn't previously know, Eileen Capes and Cliff Samuels of Calgary. They proved delightful company, and added themselves to the growing list of fans who insisted on picking up TAFF's dining tab. The food and service was good, too, considering how many fans they had to cope with. And nobody died during the meal, an observation I must sadly make because (as I did not yet know) US fan Bill Laubenheimer had done exactly that during breakfast that morning at a different restaurant.

As we staggered in, we'd made noises about getting a cab back, but we felt sufficiently refreshed to walk out, past a random Prisoner style penny-farthing hanging on the wall, and back to the hotel by a more direct route, under a long railway bridge.

I kept my eyes out for likely restaurants, bars, or other places of interest on the way, but saw few if any. Oh well, I told myself, look again in the daytime.

We arrived back at the hotel in time for an early arrivals' mixer event. Unfortunately so did everyone else who had already made it to the convention, and instructions were issued from on high that we were on no account to go wandering around the room, but should remain where we were sitting to avoid matters degenerating into chaos.

Call me old-fashioned (oh, go on – everyone else does) but I find that mixers work so much better when one is actually allowed to mix at them. I sat around hopefully for a while, then decided it wouldn't hurt me to retire to my room, rest up for the remainder of the night, and (in theory) be refreshed and full of beans in the morning.

Looking at Facebook from the comfort of my immense bed, I found a

second hint that things at Pemmi-Con were not as might be hoped; a despairing message from Craig Glassner that there was no clue, with only a few hours to go, of how the virtual con might be accessed. I did some poking around, and found that Grenadine wasn't working either. Panic! I did eventually discover that Grenadine did work, as long as you did it via a web browser window rather than the app, but I couldn't help Craig or anyone else. I didn't have the contacts, the savvy, or the spoons.

Having sussed out how to make it go, I checked Grenadine. A number of panels; more than I'd normally let myself do at a con, but as TAFF delegate I felt duty bound. But ho! What is this? A signing session? A kaffeeklatsch? A reading? All... for *me?* Two readings, in fact; one of my own work, one for someone called Gerald Brandt.

More in hope than expectation, I fired an email off to the convention pointing out that my name had become attached to someone else's event, and started to worry about the other things. I didn't have a single copy of either of my books with me, nor would any be available in the dealers' room. My editor and I had sought in vain for a dealer who might sell us a sliver of table space.

Eventually I decided there was nothing to do about it – at least I had some badges with my book covers on, thanks to Pat Virzi – and went bye-byes.

[20 July]

Came the dawn. Contrary to my normal custom, I threw myself out of bed and into my clothes with haste, eager to go and explore. Also, to get breakfast; given the choice between breakfast and sleeping in, I usually choose sleeping in, but at UK conventions experience has shown that a decent breakfast (which comes with the hotel room) is only common sense, as one never quite knows at a con when one is going to find time to eat again.

My impressions of central Winnipeg from the previous night were confirmed – all offices and parking lots, not much in the way of creature comforts. I found a small and rather cheerless café, and spotted a couple of sensitive fannish faces through the window: I went in, and the fan types immediately got up and left. I ate a solitary breakfast and told myself things could only get better from here, then returned to the hotel via the local grocery store where I stocked up on energy drinks. (Hooray for Canada, they still make my favourite no-sugar Monster there – the pale blue can whose contents taste like ground-up Refresher sweeties, long discontinued in the UK.)

Back at the hotel, things were still pretty quiet. I decided to take the

walk down to the convention centre and scope things out, since I had a panel at 2:30 p.m. (before the opening ceremony.)

The convention centre was linked to the hotel by a long and grim walkway, and it was as cavernous and as empty as Arthur C. Clarke's Rama. Here and there, surly officials sat behind security desks, and vending machines hummed tunelessly along the passageways. Sheets of A4 with arrows and text were to be seen here and there, as though the convention had only realized in the nick of time that fans would need a spot of help to navigate through the howling wasteland.

There were TV screens which had evidently been intended to guide the querent to their destination, but in a splendid exemplar of failure, they all simply read "NASFIC THE NORTH AMERIC..." Presumably the full text would have given the names of panels and the rooms they were in, but they were all truncated, and hence quite useless.

I walked on and on. The paper arrows pointed mockingly further and further from the hotel.

(Later, I discovered that the convention couldn't afford, and doubtless didn't need, the entire convention centre; and whether by design, by accident, or by necessity, the part that they had booked was the section as far away from the hotel as it was possible to get, necessitating long dreary treks between the two.)

In the end I gave up, found my way through a maze of twisty little passages all alike to street level, and hit up a bagel joint that someone had recommended. Returning to the convention centre with my spoils, I sat at one of the myriad empty tables in the main passageway and nibbled at my bagel while hoping somebody I knew would go past. Not only did I see no familiar faces, but almost nobody at all came along, apart from somebody cosplaying as Waluigi. "Wah," I greeted them; "Wah," they replied, and walked on. I couldn't help noting they were going *away* from the convention centre.

I thumbed my way through the Grenadine programme on my tablet as I ate, and was struck as I had on my previous glances by how little there was in the way of fannish programming. On one level, this didn't bother me too much, since there was a wealth of sercon and professionally oriented stuff, and now that I'm balancing with one foot in the pro camp and the other still in fandom, I could see I'd still find plenty of interest.

On the other hand... I reminded myself that I was here thanks to the Trans-Atlantic *Fan* fund, not *pro* fund (which doesn't exist, and whose name would be unpronounceable). It seemed rather cheeky of me to spend my time in Winnipeg schmoozing editors and publishers at the expense of

fans, but what choice was there? Little or none, that I could see. I sighed, screwed up my bagel wrapper, and headed for my first panel.

This went by the name of “Knowing the Roots: Representation in the Genre Before”. Before what? I don’t know; that was how it was listed on Grenadine and in the email I was sent. I assume there was meant to be more to the title.

(The programme as a whole showed every sign of having been thrown together by robots with no human eyes; for instance, the registration field had a space for you to enter your “organization”. I had put “TAFF”, which was fine, but Tanya Huff had foolishly essayed a little joke by putting “I am not at all organized” in that field, and was rewarded by having that phrase appended to her name on every single programme item featuring her. Others were flagged as variations on “n/a” or “—”, or found themselves billed as representing the organization of “Myself” (Rich Horton) or “Julie E. Czerneda” (go on, guess). And Nisi Shawl – a fucking *guest of honour*, and consequently on many programme items – was accompanied on every occasion by the tag “I believe you already have my bio and photo.” Apparently they didn’t, since her “photo” was the generic one used for people who hadn’t supplied any.)

“Modern SF is often considered to be inclusive. But when did the genre begin to include representatives of BIPOC and/or LGBTQ communities? Our panellists point out hidden examples of early SF that treat these communities with respect.” That was our brief.

In practice we pointed out very few such examples, since Cheryl Morgan, Nisi Shawl and myself all found it easier to find egregious examples of when early SF did not. Inevitably, Robert Heinlein came up. Cheryl reiterated her theory, which I’d first heard at Eastercon this year, that Heinlein was trans, an argument I wish Heinlein had lived long enough to hear and respond to. The quality of the debate was not strengthened by the room having not a single working microphone, so that we all had to bellow at the audience in the cavernous room, and then strain our ears when they talked back to us. This would have spelled disaster for anyone trying to listen-in via Zoom, except that the convention Zoom – for which fans around the world had laid down no small sums of money – still wasn’t working. (We got off lightly; I heard another programme item had to be cancelled when it was first allocated a room with no projector. Then, when hastily moved, the projector wouldn’t talk to the presenter’s Powerpoint slideshow.)

Unsurprisingly I was feeling pretty tired when the time came to end the panel. We had to do so on the scheduled dot, since we only had fifteen

minutes to get to the opening ceremony, halfway around the world back at the hotel.

I wouldn't have been particularly bothered about missing it, except that the convention email had warned that I was scheduled to take part in it. I'd frantically scratched together a few words, and sat in the big room waiting for it to begin trying to put them in some kind of order. It turned out that I was spared having to speak, or play any part in the ceremony at all. Matters began with the sound of Heather Bjorklund, of the First Nations, welcoming us with drumming and singing. I hardly like to carp, since one of the few things Pemmi-Con got right was in its firm acknowledgement that it was taking place on tribal land, but her performance featured three distinct songs and went on for Rather A Long Time, and I cannot say that I derived much pleasure or entertainment from it. Perhaps that was meant to make us feel as though the subsequent entry of the committee was shorter than the longueur it actually was. If so, it didn't work; the committee processed across the stage, like planets round an orrery, and were introduced with the usual faint round of applause, one after another, followed by such guests of honour as were actually in attendance rather than having dropped out because of scheduling conflicts or death. Since the opening ceremony, too, was devoid of any working microphones, I was not left much wiser about who was who.

Then we were regaled by the First Fandom Awards. I'm sure Mike Moorcock is very proud of being in the First Fandom Hall of Fame. Likewise, John L. Coker III carried off the Sam Moskowitz memorial award, and I'm sure this was well deserved and not just because Coker happens to be the boss of First Fandom these days.

Eventually the opening ceremony morphed uneasily into a reception. I stayed around for a little while, before fleeing to join Karen Schaffer and Michael Ward, who had thoughtfully invited me out for dinner at an Indian buffet.

The buffet, named the East India Company, turned out to bear a startling resemblance to the dear old Indian Veg restaurant on Chapel Market, Islington. I found myself sitting with a couple of fans strange to me, Dave (DJ) Johnson and Susan Kirby-Johnson; making conversation with them, Dave remarked that they'd come to the con all the way from their home in Las Vegas because they knew of no organized fandom in Vegas.

Well, *yes*. Of *course* I had to point out to them that I, though not even American, knew *plenty* of fans in Vegas. A few swift messages soon confirmed that it was fine to put them in touch with the current crop of

Vegrants, and furthermore, to invite them to the TAFF party to be held in my honour there a week hence. I felt a proud glow that TAFF was living up to its long-avowed intent of putting fans from far-flung locations in touch with one another. (For the sequel to this, you'll have to wait for chapter 7 of this report, dealing with my adventures in Vegas...)

The meal went on for quite a time, which I didn't mind, since most of the other scheduled programming that evening was filk, and by the time I got back to the hotel, the room parties were starting to get going. On the way back, we found an Irish pub and eaterie, which claimed that "New disposable and lamented menus are available." I lamented their proofreading, and passed on.

Seattle and Glasgow were both throwing parties that night. Sad to say, they were doing so in two ordinary hotel rooms next door to each other, and both of them soon became cram-jam-crowded in short order. This touched off a problem which was to mar the entire convention's social side; someone from the hotel came past, was horrified to see the struggling masses, and demanded that all parties be restricted to a suitable number for the size of the room they were being held in, namely four people.

Hasty arguments ensued, and the number was grudgingly raised to ten, but the hotel would not budge on their other diktat, which was that parties must cease at 11 p.m. Some said that this was sheer bloody-mindedness by the hotel; others that the convention hadn't thought to warn the hotel that fans like to party. Both may even have been true. It would be quite feasible. It didn't affect me directly, since by the time ten people were packed into one of the party rooms I felt crowded out, but given the amount of food and drink they'd brought along, Seattle were righteously peeved by these restrictions.

In the circumstances, it was at least a relief to see that the majority of attendees were masking up in parties and programming.

Before going to bed, I checked Grenadine once again to see if any of my programme items had changed (again), only to be greeted by a warning that the site might have been compromised and I should upon no account attempt to visit it. It transpired that this was the anniversary of the domain being registered – presumably when the NASFIC bid was successful – and nobody had remembered to renew its security certificate.

[21 July]

I didn't have much time for breakfast on Friday, and resorted to a hasty and shameful Sausage McMuffin across the road, before hastening to my first programming commitment of the day, "Human Rights: a primer",

in the same room as my previous panel. Thankfully, working microphones were now provided; less happily, this gave the loudest member of the panel a chance to talk over everyone else. Since he was acting as I'd expect a moderator to do (even if a moderator who liked the sound of his own voice too much), and since I was not very awake, I let him have his head. Afterwards I learned that he had arrogated that position to himself and that there was no moderator for the panel as such.

There was just time for me to grab another bagel from the nice bagel place before I had to double back and find the dealer room where my signing session was to take place.

The dealers' hall was a huge and cavernous affair where the few hucksters had space to rattle around like the last few peanuts at the bottom of an almost-empty packet. In the circumstances, it was easy to locate the signing table, which for this session I was sharing with Heather Rose Jones, who writes (and podcasts) queer fantasy romance. Unlike me, she had brought several neat little stacks of minty-fresh books along. I looked at them mournfully, dug into my handbag, pulled out my stash of Pat Virzi badges advertising *The Psychopath Club* and *The Devil's Finger*, and emptied them onto my half of the table.

The best that can be said for the next hour is that it gave me time to eat my bagel in a leisurely manner, and for Heather and me plenty of time to get to know one another (she was charming). Neither of us got to sign so much as the back of a till receipt, and Heather had to take her supply of unsold books away again. Frankly, I hadn't expected to be asked for a signature, but I had at least hoped to be disappointed.

I couldn't stay to look round the dealers' hall or art show (which shared a space) because yet again, I had fifteen minutes before I was needed back at the hotel for my kaffeeklatsch. The room I needed was concealed with devilish cunning around the back of the hotel swimming pool, and I arrived out of breath and in a dubious temper, expecting to find nobody there to feed me coffee and talk to me about either my fiction or TAFF.

I was wrong; I had an audience of one. Stand up and – not for the last time in this report – take a bow, Chris Marble, who had turned up because he thinks TAFF is a worthy cause to be encouraged. Chris, a hirsute and ebullient fellow, put me at my ease immediately and we passed a cheerful hour chatting about TAFF and other this-and-thats. Frankly, this was just what I needed. By the time we parted company I was feeling considerably more relaxed. This was my last programming commitment of the day and I could now do whatever the hell I wanted.

Finding nobody I knew in the hotel, I once more ventured on the trek to the far side of the convention centre, glad that I was for once in no hurry, and made my way around the dealers' den and art show, neither of which took very long. What was there, was okay, but there just wasn't very much of it. There's much talk nowadays of whether SF conventions are a dying phenomenon; if they are, it seems to me that the dealers' room is the part that's gone gangrenous first.

Then I turned a corner and was confronted with a large and unexpected photograph of myself.

Closer investigation showed that this was the article which Claire Brialey had written about me for the con's programme book. Before I left on my travels, she'd asked me if I wanted to vet it, and I'd declined, preferring not to meddle. Since Pemmi-Con had failed to provide so much as a pocket programme for attendees, far less the programme book itself, I still hadn't seen it. (Indeed, at the time of writing this, I still haven't received the programme book, nor do I know any fan who has.) Claire's write-up delivered a dose of egoboo of such proportions as to be dangerous to administer in a public place such as this, and I left the echoing hall with the disturbing sensation of my feet having risen to about six inches off the ground.

Thus energized I headed out of the convention space in search of proper nourishment. I'd noted the existence of a craft-beer-and-burger joint a few blocks away, named The Tipsy Cow, which got good online reviews; having found nobody to invite along, I made my way there solo, not unhappy to have a brief respite from having to deal with other people, and enjoyed a decent meal from a very attentive waiter named Adam, clad in a Spider-Man tee shirt, who was fascinated to learn there was an sf convention in town. I almost wished I could have recommended him to come along, sign up and join us, but by now, it was already clear that if I'd wanted to recruit him as a neofan, dragging him into Pemmi-Con was not the way to go about it: "There is a growing swell of feeling that the con is lurching along one step from falling apart," I wrote on Discord to those back home, then felt constrained to add, "(Yes, yes, I know, every con...)"

An easy and not particularly hasty saunter back to the hotel later, I was in time for what Grenadine called the "Manitoba reception in BC". My swotting up on Canadian geography before leaving home tripped me up here; surely Manitoba and British Columbia are separate provinces, some considerable distance apart? But Manitoba was the geographical descriptor, and BC the room name – it was the big hall where the opening ceremony had been. I found my way there, and discovered some actual

people I knew! (be still, my heart).

No smof I, I wouldn't normally inveigle my way into conversations about Worldcon politics and procedure, but I was happy enough to sit and listen to Sharon Sbarsky and Kevin Standlee expound upon the woes of trying to keep such things on their normal rails from North America while the Worldcon takes itself off to China. Kevin, if my notes can be believed, seemed most concerned that there was no Emergency Reserve Gavel to send to Chengdu; or perhaps he was worried that it was going to be sent there and never find its way back. He also regretted the absence of John Mansfield, fan guest of honour, who had passed away in April 2023: "the Sergeant-Major to my Second Lieutenant". (If you surmise from this that I had returned from the Tipsy Cow a little off-sober, you surmise correctly.)

I was still cheerful when room party time rolled back around; cheerful in that kind of way you get when you're defying the failings of a really duff convention, and indulging in Desperate Fun regardless rather than letting the circumstances get to you. Developments had ensued after the problems on Thursday night; the hotel had now caused a guard to be stationed by the elevators, blocking access to the party floor if it were deemed too crowded. Since my room, as I've mentioned, was on that floor, this caused annoyance, but also gave me an excellent excuse to demand access no matter how bloody crowded things were.

Some genius – it may well have been Karen Schaffer – had struck a deal whereby the Minneapolis parties on Friday and Saturday nights, rather than being confined to the cramped rooms suffered by Seattle and Glasgow, were to be held in the con suite. This meant not only that there was much more space to play with – a larger room plus the roof area outside – but made it easy for me to pop in and out of my own room as I saw fit.

2023 being fifty years after 1973, Mpls marked this banner occasion by holding a Minneapolis in 1973 party on one night and Minneapolis in 2073 the next. My notes become sparse and less than legible at this point – I blame the Minneapolis blog, which contained more alcohol than you'd have thought from its sweet fruity taste. Of names I knew, Murray Moore was there, for sure; so were Jannie Shea and Eva Whitley. "Leathers the filker", my notes say – Graham Leathers, I guess? Chris Marble was there and toasted my TAFF status once again, the dear man. My notes also mention someone who looks like "Clark Weirdo", but analysis and internet research suggests this must have been Clark Wierda. What interactions I had with him are lost to the blog and are fog. And after that, my notes peter out in an illegible scrawl like the Book of Mazarbul, and leave a

blank page for the rest of the evening.

[22 July]

I awoke with drums, drums in my ears.

Fortunately I didn't have an early panel on Saturday; my first one (back on the dark side of the moon in the convention centre, of course) wasn't till 11:30. It had the plonking title "Editors Are Sort Of Human Too, You Know". Having been blessed with editors who seem not only entirely human, but who catch my bloopers and don't make unreasonable demands or fiddle around with my work for its own sake, I wasn't sure how much I'd have to contribute; but I was looking forward to sharing a panel with (and scraping acquaintance with) Robert J. Sawyer, one of the best (and best known) writers at the con. (Listen, I'm not proud, and I'll do a lot of stuff I would normally shy away from if it'll help my nascent pro career.)

Except that he'd pulled out. He had, apparently, supplied the convention with a list of times when he would be available for programming, and times when he would not; and they had scheduled *every single appearance* in the latter, causing him not only to drop out of the relevant panels, but to make a public post to social media saying just what he thought of the Pemmi-Con programming team, which wasn't much. ("Sending out all your programming emails from an email address that says 'no-reply@grenadine.com' does NOT make communication easy." Hard to argue with that.)

Once again, I breakfasted lightly off a bagel, and headed for the convention centre; a journey not made easier by the fact that the one accessible elevator en route had now been shut down (I heard differing opinions on whether this was the hotel being ornery for the sake of it again, or whether it was simply because it was the weekend... but surely they *must* be used to people needing to use it over weekend events?)

And once again, I sat down in the corridors of the centre to eat it and people-watch. This time, though, I was interrupted by someone who'd been in the human rights panel the previous morning, and wanted me to educate him about how Europe approaches the topic. I found myself at a considerable loss: I don't mind getting into internet debates on this subject, but having to explain my views verbally is quite another matter, and trying to explain the views of an entire continent upon which the UK had not too long ago turned its back, another and tougher matter still. I must have come up with something satisfactory, though Christ knows what, because eventually he thanked me and went away, leaving me feeling half flattered to be asked and half cross with myself for not being more articulate. Still,

no time for rumination; the panel was starting.

In the absence of Robert Sawyer, alongside me on the dais this time were Canadian authors Karl Schroeder and Edward Willett... and, subbing for Sawyer, David Levine, a face I was pleased to see because while he's not a close friend or anything, he was (and is) at least a *fan* goddamnit, and like myself he's made his way up from fan to pro in the same way as me (the way you don't hardly see no more), only he started earlier, and has done better.

I didn't have a vast amount to add to the panel, as I'd expected, but there was no lack of anecdotes and grouching about editors who feel they need to justify their role by changing as many words as they can for synonyms (a habit that in sf, goes at least as far back as Horace Gold), and egregious editorial horrors such as the wretch who combined a pair of brothers in a John Brunner manuscript into one character, evidently believing that Brunner had merely been careless with the first name.

In fact, my primary moment in the spotlight came when at one point the topic turned to punctuation, and I was delighted that David Levine mentioned the well-remembered Minicon panel about "fannish accents" (in which Teresa Nielsen Hayden was accused of pronouncing the comma in 'Mesa, Arizona'). I was able to confirm that – as, one day, people reading this report in its proper order will already know – I'd just helped Geri Sullivan unearth a cassette tape of that panel, the appearance of which upon fanac.org I'm looking forward to... right, Geri?

From that panel I yet again had fifteen minutes to scurry back to the hotel for the "Poetry in Speculative Fiction" panel, upon which I'd found myself despite my poetry generally having little to do with any particular genre. This was compered by Wendy Van Camp, a poet hitherto unknown to me despite being poet laureate of Anaheim, CA; she did a splendid job and I jotted down as much information on markets, marketing, and resources as I decently could.

Like the last panel, this one too had an unexpected high point, when Danny Sichel of Montreal stood up in the audience and wondered whether anyone remembered John M. Ford, and in particular his poem "Against Entropy". Evidently fearing they did not, he began to recite it from memory. Multiple voices, mine among them, chimed in with the final line: "Say what you mean. Bear witness. Iterate."

I challenged him to repeat the trick with another of Mike's classics, "110 Stories", from which I stole a trick for my least unknown poem ever ("A Ballade of Facebook"), but he couldn't or wouldn't.

With a little more forethought (it seemed) I could have stayed in that

same room at the end of the poetry panel, because the next scheduled item was the fan fund auction; but I had to scoot up to my room to collect the box full of donations I'd amassed on my trip thus far. Returning, out of breath, I found to my dismay and anger that the auction... had been cancelled, and the room was setting up for some other panel.

Exhausted and cross, I took to Facebook to grumble, eliciting much support from the community (the pithiest response, with which I felt much sympathy, was "Fuck these people," coming from Andy Hooper, who has auctioned more fannish material for worthy causes than Ted White has enjoyed hot tokes).

By way of consolation, I found this cancellation enabled me, after all, to get into proximity with Robert J. Sawyer; incredibly, there were still free spaces for his "Thematic Approach to SF Writing" masterclass in the Tuxedo Boardroom (no tuxedo required). A selection of quasiquotes from this:

> "*We have never knowingly published anyone with an MFA." (– attr. Ginjer Buchanan)*
> "*My thematic approach means that I don't start with characters, but with topics."*
> "*Look for the character who will be most put out by your premise or theme. Focus on them."*
> "*All SF is not about the year it's set in, but the year in which it's written."*

I was pleased to find that Sawyer is a self-assured and knowledgeable man, lacking in few things except self-importance, and overflowing with tips which he was happy to cast all around him, seed sewn broadcast. Once again I was pleased with my decision to focus on sercon matters at the convention in the absence of much in the way of fannish programming, rather than sitting in a grump bemoaning the latter.

I emerged from the masterclass, and checked to discover that the fan fund auction had been revived. Muttering epithets about the programming committee, I rushed back up to my room *again* to retrieve the box of donations, and started to look for a room called "Assiniboia A".

This turned out to be a remote outpost, down in the hotel basement, and if there was no sign on the door saying "Beware of the Leopard" it was only because the convention had probably stuck it on the wrong door. The previous item in the room had been yet another filk concert, which fact was evident from the fact that the place was littered with amps, mic stands and similar paraphernalia. I waited for gophers to come and take

them away and prep the room for the auction. I waited for people to come and form the audience who would bid on the auction. I waited in vain.

CUFF delegate Garth Spencer rolled up with a much bigger box of auction lots than I could boast. We started to spread them out on the one small side table available to us, glancing at the door in hope that *someone* would show up. And eventually, they did; four of them, including once again that hero of TAFF, Chris Marble.

Garth and I looked at each other in resignation; it was already well past time for us to start, in theory. And so, start we did. We had no runners, we had no cash float or cash box, we had nobody keeping records. All we had was some guitar stands, three fanzines, and the truth.

There are not many records I can claim in fandom; but I do think that Garth and I deserve a place in song and story for running the only fan fund auction that has ever been, or is likely to be, where everyone in the room bought something. One of us would pick an item and start hawking it, while the other scrawled down the result of the last bid on the file cards which were all we had by way of paper, and then scrabbled for the following lot. It should have been a recipe for disaster, yet somehow, we made it work.

Top bid for a TAFF item was $17 for *The Best of Xero*, donated a few days ago in Minneapolis by Gary Farber, and carried off by a fan with the badge name “Star Bright”. Garth himself secured another Farber donation, a very fat copy of the Chicago Style Manual which I was relieved I’d not have to lug as far as Seattle and Andy Hooper. I broke my own rule about Not Buying Books Or Fannish Shit On This Trip, and knocked down to myself two 1960s N3F pamflets, retrieved by Joyce Scrivner from the estate of Denny Lien, and so can now regale anybody curious with Some Historical Facts About S-F Fandom (as compiled by Donald Franson) or details of The Amateur Press Associations In S-F Fandom (retailed by ‘Bob’ Lichtman).

Eventually both Garth and I were worn to frazzles and the auction was allowed to stutter to a halt, with TAFF richer by $70 Canadian. I hope the intrepid quartette in the audience enjoyed either their bargains, or the sight of two fan fund delegates trying to sell shit in a frenzy, or both.

Part of the reason I was so exhausted was that I’d barely had time to eat today, the auction being the last in a continuous string of programme items which had begun at 11:30 a.m. I couldn’t face a long trek for dinner and resorted to the Elephant and Castle, the expensive “pub” restaurant attached to the hotel, where I had no sooner sat down than I was immediately hailed by a table full of the Glasgow 2024 Worldcon staff,

inviting me to join them in tones that would brook no denial. I was happy to accede to this request, all the more so when – yet again – I found myself prevented for paying for my own dinner by main force. This generosity was all the more noteworthy since I knew two of them on barely nodding acquaintance, and two not at all.

Relaxed at last, I compared notes with the quartette – Vincent Docherty, Alan Fleming, David Bamford, and Steve Cooper. They had done quite well for Glasgow, but they could only agree with me that All Was Not Well at Pemmi-Con. I pointed out to them that this could hardly fail to make them look good by compare, next year. I think this was where I learned that the Zoom problems besetting the convention, which I'd assumed were now fixed, were far from that; for instance, those hoping to watch the masquerade had found themselves with sound but no picture, and somehow I feel that a masquerade you can't watch must be lacking that certain something. The words "Pemmi-Con fuck up bingo" appear in my notes at this point; presumably whoever collects the entire set of mishaps on their card shouts "House!" and gets to run the next convention.

I was starting to fall into an evening routine, now; a circle between my room, the con suite and the nightly Minneapolis party, a wander round downstairs, and a session on the four pinball tables which the con had provided. This prevented me from feeling stale or 'peopled out.' I'd hardly expected to go to Winnipeg to play pinball, but I'm happy to indulge that hobby of mine on any occasion (pinball tables no longer being easily found), particularly when able to play for nix. I was meant to take part in a turkey reading session that night, but couldn't find it. I expect it had been moved, or retimed, or both. Or maybe I was just too tiddly to locate it. Garth later assured me that it had happened, but like Eliza Doolittle with Henry Higgins, they had done bloody well without me.

Eventually the stern guard by the elevators wore away my desire to keep circulating, and I remained in the con suite, watching people colour in and/or write captions on Ken Fletcher cartoons of dirigibles, and taking further refreshment aboard, until sleepiness began to supervene. Let's just say that by that time, it was a good job only a dozen steps separated my hotel room door from the con suite's.

[23 July]

Sunday morning was, it seemed, the morning for author readings.

A quick final check of Grenadine showed that Gerald Brandt had finally been granted the basic right to do his own reading instead of me having to do it. I was half tempted to go to it, but instead, after our previous interactions during the con, I plumped for David Levine's.

David regaled us with a chapter from his upcoming novel *The Kuiper Belt Job*. The 'job' turned out to be a scientifictional twist on the Ocean's Eleven type of heist, and he read it entertainingly. Afterwards I made a joke about the "Caper Belt" and he visibly winced, but whether out of sympathy or by way of revenge, he came along to my reading from *The Psychopath Club*, and only pointed out one place where I'd used a UK English turn of phrase instead of a US one.

The last programme item I attended was on the subject of Writing Support. Here both notes and memory fail me, and all I can offer is "No mics AGAIN!", "Tiptree foundation?", and "So many faceblind ppl!". Anyone who can derive any support from that lot has my admiration.

The closing ceremony was like the opening ceremony, only with working microphones, and with a bagpiper in addition to a reprise from Heather Bjorklund and her drum.

Only one item remained unticked-off, now, on my list of commitments; I'd been invited to the Staff Dinner that evening at the other, even posher, hotel restaurant. I didn't feel hugely sociable or hugely hungry, and I was wary lest the staff ask me what I thought of the convention, in which case I might have had to tell them and cause alarm and despondency; but I once more reminded myself that I was on TAFF and here to meet people, and besides, it was free.

The ghost of Robert Heinlein chuckled quietly in the shadows at this point, but I didn't hear him.

First off, I couldn't find the dinner in the half-empty restaurant. It turned out to be hidden in a back room of the restaurant, and by the time I discovered it, most people had already ordered.

Then, it soon became clear that the restaurant staff were absolutely overwhelmed by the size of the dinner party – some thirty people on three tables. Food began to inch its way out of the kitchen toward the other end of the dinner party. None of it came downstream as far as me or my fellow late arrivals, Publius Carson and Reggie Franchi.

Con chair Robbie Bourget kept trying to make conversation on my right, but that is my deaf side, and – to steal a line from Dave Langford – Robbie is a member neither of Large Fandom nor of Loud Fandom. Publius and I passed ribald comment on the hipster soup dishes, whose brims sloped downward rather than upward from the edge of the actual bowl part, rendering them quite useless in the event of spillage. Chris Marble said some things about the french fries which I can't read in my notes, but which may not have been polite. John Harold made up for Robbie's quietness and more by being loud and outspoken from further

down the table. The heat death of the universe silently inched closer.

Eventually, 82 minutes after our orders had been taken, Publius and I finally received some indifferent food. By this point we could have eaten crudzines on toast and felt ourselves lucky.

And then, before I'd even finished, I found myself presented with a bill of no small extent. Guess what? Apparently the invitation to the staff dinner as an honoured guest did not, as I'd assumed, mean that my food would actually be paid for. I dragged out my credit card, suppressing a snarl, and thanked every fannish deity that TAFF was solvent enough to pick up the slack here and pay for the worst meal I'd eaten in Canada.

I discovered later, from what journalists call A Reliable Source, that the Committee Slack had described the meal as "Help us fulfil the last of our F&B requirement." In other words, the hapless staff of the convention, as well as its guests and hangers-on such as I, were having to pay from our own pockets because Pemmi-Con had failed to fulfil its contractual obligations to the hotel. Well, goodness.

Apparently an email to staff members from Jannie Shea had also given them details on where to go and when, along with the confirmation that they were on their own as far as payment went; but this didn't even make it to the Slack channel, far less to us mere mortals who, of course, knew nothing of this.

I wish I could say that this chaotic failure of communication was the sole instance of such at the convention; but as perspicacious readers will have noted, it was the rule and not the exception. I considered making a scene, but both exhaustion and my sense of dignity as a TAFF delegate militated against it, and I simply tucked my credit card away again and slunk out, grateful that the food and drink at what different official sources called the Dead Moose or the Dazed Moose Party would at least be free. Moreover, even a bowl of peanuts or M&Ms would be tastier than what I'd just consumed.

A general air of relief permeated the con suite. Various fans whom I'd already met at the con were there again, making weary conversation, some of it not about the convention's failings – Sharon Sbarsky, Michael Ward, Karen Schaffer, Murray Moore – as well as some I had managed to miss so far, such as Janice and Chip Morningstar, and convention department head Kim Monson (I didn't dare ask which department, in case it was one of those which had crashed and burned in the face of difficulties). People wandered out to the deck, and back in to the drinks, in the great circle of life which characterizes all convention dead dog parties. Equally characteristic was the amount of alcohol on offer which nobody

wanted the bother of taking home with them.

I was just about to call it a night when I found myself sandwiched between Jay Spitzer of Chicago, and Stuart Cooper of Edmonton, both of whom pressed cans of interesting-looking beer upon me. Politeness and greed combined forces, and insisted that I should take both. I calculated that I could probably manage one more without immediate disaster, and opened it, tucking the other one away in my handbag for future reference (it went with me as far as Las Vegas, where I rediscovered it in circumstances which – once again – you must wait to learn until chapter 7 of this report). I sipped it quietly, and nursed the last of it until I was sure nobody was looking my way and about to press further alcohol upon me; and then I made a break for it.

I covered the distance between the con suite and my room in five seconds flat – which would be more impressive if I hadn't already confessed they were next door to each other.

I shed my clothing in heaps all over the floor, set my alarm, and climbed for the last time into that enormous bed.

I wasn't quite sure how, but I had survived Pemmi-Con.

And tomorrow, I was going on a road trip.

Envoi: "What we have here is a failure to communicate"

As I wrote on Facebook on Monday 24 July: "And so PemmiCon tumbles into its pauper's grave, mourned more for what it might have been than for what it was. I wish I could say it was a good con, but it really wasn't very well run at all."

Why was Pemmi-Con such a disaster of a convention, in so many ways?

As a fan who avoids, as much as she can, running conventions – I know my limits – you should take my opinions with a pinch of salt. But here are some observations.

Trying to get a response out of the convention, either beforehand or during it, was apparently quite impossible. I was lucky; I had the saintly Murray Moore watching over me, and he evidently had a direct line to God's ear denied to less fortunate members. Emails went unanswered; so did too many pleas on social media.

Linked to this, signage varied between atrocious and non-existent. It hardly needs a planning genius to realize that it's required when running a con that covers as much physical space as Pemmi-Con.

Similarly, to require conventioneers to consult an online resource as the sole way of finding out what's going on is not acceptable; too many fans lack easy access to the net even nowadays, especially when (as here) a

good many of them are travellers from another territory and having to pay eye-watering roaming rates. And yet, there was no programme book (as mentioned above, there still isn't); there was no pocket programme. If you couldn't look at Grenadine, your only option was to cluster round a chart affixed to the wall near registration, where people with good eyesight could just about make out an events list in tiny print. Hardly once did I pass that spot without there being a clump of people peering at that chart.

Furthermore, as I've remarked already, the convention's Grenadine was wildly variable as regards accuracy, and as regards being kept up to date.

The newsletter was widely available, well laid out and printed, and often amusing to scan; but a great deal of its content was mere whimsy when it might otherwise have served as a valuable source of hard information. The committee *were* feeding info to the newsletter team, weren't they... weren't they?

Then – this is mere hearsay – I heard mutterings from more than one source that the con was understaffed. What staff they *did* have, at least below committee level, seemed to be working devotedly and at full capacity; but the list of lacunae – in tech ops, in gophering, in (yes, again) communication – meant that too often rooms that were meant to host this or that item were in no fit state to serve that purpose.

The hotel, while efficiently run *qua* hotel, showed every sign of starting out from an attitude of bare tolerance toward the con, and becoming steadily worse from there. Whether the convention can shoulder any blame for this, I don't know; if it were the only flaw in the event, I'd give them the benefit of the doubt, but when stacked up alongside all the other issues, one is forced to wonder what went on in hotel liaison before and during the event.

I'm even less qualified to comment on financial matters than I am any other aspect of the con; but rumours abounded regarding the convention's cash status, and how dire an outlook it was wearing. And indeed, the report presented to fandom, on 15 August 2023, showed a deficit of only a whisker short of twenty-five thousand Canadian dollars.

What's more, and I quote:

"Please note that the financial report that we submitted to this year's WSFS Business Meeting is an interim report, not the final report. Thank you!" (Pemmi-Con, 12 October, Facebook)

I don't know what the final report may say, nor whether it will show any improvement in the above figures or – as seems more likely – a further descent into the financial maelstrom, nor (more importantly) when fandom

may expect to see it.

Any of the above failings might be expected from any convention; but to see them all together in a row, like sad and empty bottles after a room party, causes concern. After all, there's another NASFiC next year in Buffalo, and it can hardly benefit Buffalo to have to put on a con overshadowed by such a string of failings as Pemmi-Con displayed.

Or perhaps everyone will say that no matter what mishaps Buffalo may run into, "Oh, it's not as bad as Winnipeg!"

I hope they'll be able to say so with genuine feeling, and not as mere whistling in the dark.

Idea #13, December 2023

Appendix

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all contributors and/or their estates, and in particular to the TAFF winners whose reports are still in progress but who kindly allowed “teaser” chapters to appear here (see Introduction); to all the intrepid fanzine editors listed in Original Appearances below; and to the *Locus* editorial team for approving the use of segments written by Elliot K. Shorter for *Locus* in its fanzine days and technically copyrighted by *Locus* founder Charles N. Brown. I’m additionally grateful to John Coxon, Jeanne Gomoll and Jim Mowatt, who were represented in the 2017 edition of the anthology and made no objection to being dropped from this update because their complete TAFF reports have now been published and are available from the free library at taff.org.uk.

Further thanks to the following friends of TAFF for scanning, rekeying, otherwise supplying, proofreading, or giving permission to reprint material used in this book: Linda Blanchard, Sandra Bond, Richard Brandt, Claire Brialey, Randy Byers, Vin¢ Clarke, Rob Hansen, Brian Jordan, Jerry Kaufman, Marilee J. Layman, Robert Lichtman, Ulrika O’Brien, Mark L. Olson, Mark Plummer, Alison Scott (with some clever dictation software) and Jim Singleton.

David Langford
March 2025

Original Appearances

The TAFF platform for each included fund winner (or pair of joint winners) is taken from the relevant TAFF ballot. All past ballots are archived at taff.org.uk.

- Sandra Bond: “Chapter 5: Pemmi-Con, Winnipeg, 19-23 July 2023” – *Idea* #13, December 2023, edited by Geri Sullivan.
- Jeanne Bowman: “The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 1” – *Ansible* #57½, Easter 1992, edited by Dave Langford.
- Jeanne Bowman: “The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 2” – *Ansible* #97½, August 1995, edited by Dave Langford.
- Randy Byers: “Blame TAFF” – *Concourse Progress Report 3*, October 2003, edited by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer.
- Randy Byers: “Chapter 1: Why I Ran For TAFF” – *Chunga* #3, January 2003, edited by Andy Hooper, Randy Byers and carl juarez.
- Randy Byers: “Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 1)” – *Chunga* #6, December 2003, edited by Andy Hooper, Randy Byers and carl juarez.
- Randy Byers: “Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 2): Against the Sneers of Nothingness” – *Chunga* #8, September 2004, edited by Andy Hooper, Randy Byers and carl juarez.
- Avedon Carol: untitled – *Ansible* #33, June 1983, edited by Dave Langford.
- Avedon Carol: “The Present State of Affairs” – *Blatant* #13, February 1985, edited by Avedon Carol.
- Terry Carr: “Beyond the Mnemonic Statute of Limitations” – *Raffles* #8, August 1984, edited by Larry Carmody and Stu Shiffman.
- Lilian Edwards: “Chapter 2: The Once and Future Seattle” – *The Wrong Leggings* #3, August 1995, edited by Lilian Edwards.
- Abigail Frost: “In Progress” – *In Progress* (one-off), September 1993, edited by Abigail Frost.
- Abigail Frost: “The Frost Report” – *Ansible* #74, September 1993, edited by Dave Langford.
- Abigail Frost: “The Frost Report: ConFrancisco” – *Ansible* #75, October 1993, edited by Dave Langford.
- Abigail Frost: “The Frost Report: Fragment” – *Ansible* #97½, August 1995, edited by Dave Langford.

- Anne and Brian Gray: “Anne and Brian Trip Through Corflu” – *Argentus* #10, December 2010, edited by Steven H Silver.
- Steve Green: “Taff Notes: Prelude” – *Argentus* #9, 2009, edited by Steven H Silver.
- Steve Green: “Westward Bound!” – *Journey Planet* #5, January 2010 (Alternate History theme issue), edited by James Bacon, Chris Garcia and Claire Brialey.
- Steve Green: “LV Confidential” – *Beam* #3, May 2011, edited by Nic Farey.
- Terry Hughes: “An Excerpt from Chapter Nine” – *Wing Window* #7, February 1984, edited by John D. Berry.
- Terry Hughes: “Two-Fisted TAFF Tales” – *Sticky Quarters* #13, November 1985, edited by Brian Earl Brown.
- Christina Lake: “The Untitled Chapter” – *Balloons over Bristol* #2, October 1988, edited by Christina Lake and Peter-Fred Thompson.
- Christina Lake: “Chapter 1: In the beginning God said let there be flight” – *Two Times TAFF* #4, November 1990, edited by Christina Lake and Lilian Edwards.
- Christina Lake: “Let’s Go to San Francisco” – *Never Quite Arriving* #3, January 1995, edited by Christina Lake.
- Christina Lake: “Voodoo Jambalaya” – *The Caprician* #4, May 1989, edited by Christina Lake and Lilian Edwards.
- Robert Lichtman: “Doorway” – *Trap Door* #9, January 1990, edited by Robert Lichtman.
- Robert Lichtman: “Report in Progress” – *Report in Progress* (one-off), 1990, edited by Robert Lichtman.
- Michael Lowrey: “Chapter the First: The Trip That Never Was” – *Beam* #17, October 2022, edited by Nic Farey and Ulrika O’Brien.
- Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden: “Introductory” – *Taffluvia* #2, August 1985, edited by Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden.
- Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden: “Work in Progress” – *Flash Point* #8, February 1986, edited by Patrick Nielsen Hayden.
- Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden: “Aspects & Inclinations” – *Hyphen* #37, Autumn 1987, edited by Walt Willis.
- Teresa and Patrick Nielsen Hayden: “TAFF in Thirteen Paragraphs” – *Sticky Quarters* #13, November 1985, edited by Brian Earl Brown.
- Ulrika O’Brien: “Exit, Pursued by a Gael: A Taff Defense of Sorts” – *Widening Gyre* #5, March 2000, edited by Ulrika O’Brien.
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carl juarez.

- [Greg Pickersgill] Ted White: "from *Letters from Prison*" – #2 in #1-#3, September 1986, published by Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden; #14 in #11-#14, October 1986, published by John D. Berry; all collected as *Letters from Jail* (QWERTYUIOPress, 2021).
- [Greg Pickersgill] Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden: "Greg Pickersgill's TAFF Visit" – *TAFFluvia* #8, November 1986, edited by Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden.
- [Greg Pickersgill] Linda Blanchard: "TAFFman at ConFederation" – extract (untitled in the original) from *Scattershot* #3, September 1986, edited by Linda Blanchard.
- [Greg Pickersgill] Mike Glicksohn: "TAFFman in Toronto" – *The Caprician* #4, May 1989, edited by Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake.
- John Purcell: "Riding on the Metro" – *Vibrator* #46, November 2017, edited by Graham Charnock.
- Stu Shiffman: "Suddenly, Last Winter" – *Visitor's Pass* (one-off), April 1981, edited by Dave Langford and Stu Shiffman.
- Stu Shiffman: "A Raffles Lad Abroad or The Road to Yorcon" – *Raffles* #6, May 1982, edited by Stu Shiffman and Larry Carmody.
- Elliot K. Shorter: "Introduction – A Shorter Odyssey" – *Locus* #60, 23 July 1970, edited by Charles N. Brown.
- Elliot K. Shorter: "Heicon Report" – *Locus* #63, 15 September 1970, edited by Charles N. Brown.
- Elliot K. Shorter: "How Fearless Leader Got His Name" – *The Spanish Inquisition* #7/8, June 1976, edited by Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Tompkins.
- Maureen Kincaid Speller: *Snufkin Goes West...* #1, July 1998, edited by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer (Fishlifter Press).
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- Dan Steffan: "TAFFragment 1: Riding the TAFF Rails" – *Apparatchik* #53, 15 February 1996, edited by Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez.

- Dan Steffan: “TAFFragment 2: You Can’t Get There from Here” – *Apparatchik* #54, 29 February 1996, edited by Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez.
- Dan Steffan: “TAFFragment 3: Leave the Driving to Us” – *Apparatchik* #59, 9 May 1996, edited by Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez.
- Dan Steffan: “TAFFragment 4: Go West, Young Fan” – *Apparatchik* #62, 20 June 1996, edited by Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez.
- Dan Steffan: “TAFFragment 5: Hotel Hansen (The Early Years)” – *Apparatchik* #66, 29 August 1996, edited by Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez.
- Roy Tackett: “Tackett’s Travels in Taffland” – *Sticky Quarters* #13, November 1985, edited by Brian Earl Brown.
- Wally Weber: “Cry Abroad” – *Cry of the Nameless* #174, June 1964
- Pam Wells: “Introductory: Depression Tango” – *Saliromania* #6, October 1991, edited by Michael Ashley.
- Pam Wells: “Chapter 1: All Gone to Look for America” – *Attitude* #7, February 1996, edited by Michael Abbott, John Dallman and Pam Wells.
- Pam Wells: “Chapter 2: Minneapolis Memories” – *Attitude* #12, November 1997, edited by Michael Abbott, John Dallman and Pam Wells.
- Peter Weston: “Stranger in a Very Strange Land” – *Science Fiction Monthly* vol 2 no 6, June 1975.

Index by Winner

This is an alphabetical list of TAFF delegates appearing in this ebook. For chronological order by year of TAFF trip, see Contents or the full roster of all TAFF winners to date in the Introduction.

- Sandra Bond
- Jeanne Bowman
- Randy Byers
- Avedon Carol
- Terry Carr
- Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake
- Abigail Frost
- Anne and Brian Gray
- Steve Green
- Terry Hughes
- Christina Lake and Lilian Edwards
- Robert Lichtman
- Michael Lowrey
- Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden
- Ulrika O'Brien
- Curt Phillips
- Greg Pickersgill
- John Purcell
- Stu Shiffman
- Elliot K. Shorter
- Maureen Kincaid Speller
- Dan Steffan
- Roy Tackett
- Wally Weber
- Pam Wells
- Peter Weston

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Table of Contents

TAFF Trip Report Anthology
Contents
Introduction
TAFF in Thirteen Paragraphs
1963: Wally Weber
Cry Abroad
1965: Terry Carr
Beyond the Mnemonic Statute of Limitations
1970: Elliot K. Shorter
Introduction – A Shorter Odyssey
How Fearless Leader Got His Name
Heicon Report
1974: Peter Weston
Stranger in a Very Strange Land
1976: Roy Tackett
Tackett's Travels in Taffland
1979: Terry Hughes
Two-Fisted TAFF Tales
An Excerpt from Chapter Nine
1981: Stu Shiffman
Suddenly, Last Winter
A Raffles Lad Abroad or The Road to Yorcon
1983: Avedon Carol
Untitled
The Present State of Affairs
1985: Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden
Introductory
Work in Progress
Aspects & Inclinations
1986: Greg Pickersgill
Fragments
TAFFman at ConFederation
TAFFman in Toronto
1988: Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake
Chapter 1: In the beginning God said let there be flight
Chapter 2: The Once and Future Seattle

Let’s Go to San Francisco
Voodoo Jambalaya
The Untitled Chapter
1989: Robert Lichtman
Doorway
Report in Progress
1991: Pam Wells
Introductory: Depression Tango
Chapter 1: All Gone to Look for America
Chapter 2: Minneapolis Memories
1992: Jeanne Bowman
The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 1
The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 2
1993: Abigail Frost
In Progress
The Frost Report
The Frost Report: Fragment
The Frost Report: ConFrancisco
1995: Dan Steffan
TAFFragment 1: Riding the TAFF Rails
TAFFragment 2: You Can’t Get There from Here
TAFFragment 3: Leave the Driving to Us
TAFFragment 4: Go West, Young Fan
TAFFragment 5: Hotel Hansen (The Early Years)
1998: Ulrika O’Brien
Exit, Pursued by a Gael A Taff Defense of Sorts
1998: Maureen Kincaid Speller
Snufkin Goes West... 1
Snufkin Goes West... 2
Snufkin Goes West... 3
Snufkin Goes West... 4
2003: Randy Byers
Blame TAFF
Chapter 1: Why I Ran For TAFF
Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 1)
Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 2) Against the Sneers of Nothingness
2009: Steve Green
Taff Notes: Prelude
Westward Bound!

LV Confidential
2010: Anne and Brian Gray
Anne and Brian Trip Through Corflu
2014: Curt Phillips
There Was a Tear, and Some Beer, in Reading
2017: John Purcell
Riding on the Metro
2020: Michael Lowrey
Chapter the First: The Trip That Never Was
2023: Sandra Bond
Chapter 5: Pemmi-Con, Winnipeg, 19-23 July 2023
Appendix
Acknowledgements
Original Appearances
Index by Winner

Table of Contents

TAFF Trip Report Anthology 2
Contents 4
Introduction 8
TAFF in Thirteen Paragraphs 12
1963: Wally Weber 16
Cry Abroad 17
1965: Terry Carr 21
Beyond the Mnemonic Statute of Limitations 22
1970: Elliot K. Shorter 31
Introduction – A Shorter Odyssey 32
How Fearless Leader Got His Name 34
Heicon Report 38
1974: Peter Weston 45
Stranger in a Very Strange Land 46
1976: Roy Tackett 51
Tackett's Travels in Taffland 52
1979: Terry Hughes 58
Two-Fisted TAFF Tales 59
An Excerpt from Chapter Nine 66
1981: Stu Shiffman 70
Suddenly, Last Winter 71
A Raffles Lad Abroad or The Road to Yorcon 73
1983: Avedon Carol 85
Untitled 86
The Present State of Affairs 87
1985: Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden 89
Introductory 90

Work in Progress 92
Aspects & Inclinations 96
1986: Greg Pickersgill 106
Fragments 107
TAFFman at ConFederation 109
TAFFman in Toronto 113
1988: Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake 123
Chapter 1: In the beginning God said let there be flight 124
Chapter 2: The Once and Future Seattle 131
Let’s Go to San Francisco 140
Voodoo Jambalaya 146
The Untitled Chapter 153
1989: Robert Lichtman 160
Doorway 161
Report in Progress 165
1991: Pam Wells 182
Introductory: Depression Tango 183
Chapter 1: All Gone to Look for America 186
Chapter 2: Minneapolis Memories 191
1992: Jeanne Bowman 197
The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 1 198
The Almost Factual Fan: Fragment 2 199
1993: Abigail Frost 200
In Progress 201
The Frost Report 206
The Frost Report: Fragment 208
The Frost Report: ConFrancisco 209
1995: Dan Steffan 210
TAFFragment 1: Riding the TAFF Rails 211

TAFFragment 2: You Can’t Get There from Here 216
TAFFragment 3: Leave the Driving to Us 220
TAFFragment 4: Go West, Young Fan 224
TAFFragment 5: Hotel Hansen (The Early Years) 229
1998: Ulrika O’Brien 236
Exit, Pursued by a Gael A Taff Defense of Sorts 237
1998: Maureen Kincaid Speller 250
Snufkin Goes West... 1 251
Snufkin Goes West... 2 255
Snufkin Goes West... 3 259
Snufkin Goes West... 4 262
2003: Randy Byers 267
Blame TAFF 268
Chapter 1: Why I Ran For TAFF 270
Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 1) 275
Appendix Zed: Detailed Itinerary of a TAFF Trip (Part 2) 280
Against the Sneers of Nothingness
2009: Steve Green 287
Taff Notes: Prelude 288
Westward Bound! 291
LV Confidential 293
2010: Anne and Brian Gray 299
Anne and Brian Trip Through Corflu 300
2014: Curt Phillips 312
There Was a Tear, and Some Beer, in Reading 313
2017: John Purcell 321
Riding on the Metro 322
2020: Michael Lowrey 330
Chapter the First: The Trip That Never Was 331

2023: Sandra Bond 335
Chapter 5: Pemmi-Con, Winnipeg, 19-23 July 2023 336
Appendix 357
Acknowledgements 358
Original Appearances 359
Index by Winner 363